The Gift

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/19835986.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham, Will Graham's Dogs, Jack Crawford, Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller, Donald Sutcliffe
Additional Tags:	season 1 AU, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Hannigram Reverse Bang, Fluff, Fluff and Smut, Hannibal's past, Will's Past, Hannibal Lecter Loves Will Graham, Will Graham Loves Hannibal Lecter, First Time, First Kiss, Will Graham Has Encephalitis
Language:	English
Collections:	Hannigram_Reverse_Bang_2019, Wendigo & Stag, The Temple Of Athens
Stats:	Published: 2019-07-17 Words: 24,280 Chapters: 1/1

The Gift

by obfuscatedheart

Summary

A case has Will travelling to a location that is all too familiar. In an antique store he finds something that makes him think of Hannibal, on impulse he purchases it. A gift that unbeknown to him takes Hannibal back to his own past.

Notes

This has been an absolute blast to write, the art is absolutely stunning and I owe a huge thanks to Pan for creating such a wonderful piece of art! make sure to check out the rest of Pan's art!

Thank you to my beta Fishie who whipped this into shape

The humidity is so familiar that Will has to remind himself that he doesn't live in Louisiana any longer. Within moments of stepping out of the plane his shirt is stuck to his back and he pulls at it to try and settle himself.

Louisiana contains so many conflicting memories for him that he usually avoids coming back. But this case had demanded the BAU's attention, and therefore Will's. Jack has offered for Will to take the private plane along with the rest of the team. But Will wanted to travel alone to his home state.

There's a stop he has to make before he meets with the rest of the team. Once he is through security and on the other side of the terminal building he hails a cab.

It's easy to slip back into the drawl that he had spent so long keeping out of his voice, so easy that the driver asks him if he's on his way home.

"Something like that." Will says in answer.

The driver nods as if he understands, and Will thinks it's highly likely that he does.

The rest of the drive is spent in silence with neither man making an effort to start a conversation. Will is glad for the time away from the large swathes of people that had been in the plane and airport.

After a while the driver switches on the radio and barely audible blues begin to play. Instantly Will is transported to his childhood; driving in a pickup truck with the blues playing and his dad singing along. Moments in which Will could forget the way the other kids would stare and whisper about him.

When the cab arrives at the destination Will hands over a fistful of bills. Once he gets out he is once again struck by the humidity. There is something about it that makes him feel like he has tried to pull on clothes from his childhood that are far too tight and constricting.

He passes through the gates and along the rows until he reaches the one he is looking for. Crouching down in front of the headstone he looks around the grave. It had been kept neat by the custodian of the graveyard. Even so he clears the slightly wilted bouquet from the holder. His mother's family still sometimes visited the grave but they would hate that he was there. Sighing he straightens out again before walking towards his hotel, only a block away.

***

Getting out of the shower he checks his phone and chuckles at the photo Alana has sent him of the dogs and Hannibal. He is glad he had asked her and Hannibal to take turns looking after the dogs, because the bemused look on Hannibal's face is ridiculous, and Alana has captured it perfectly.

The other text is from Jack; simply an address. Getting dressed he mentally prepares himself for the crime scene. It had been an address he recognised right away. Not for the first time, he wonders why he hadn't taken Hannibal's advice and skipped this case.

The messages that come through next confirms why he does it. Jack had sent across the possible body total. As much as he feels like he is being pulled in all directions relentlessly, he is sure that he is doing the right thing.

***

He walks the three blocks to the crime scene. The smell is the first thing that brings him back to his youth. It's the distinct mixture of motor oil, fish and people that makes Will feel 13 again. In the 20 or so years since he had last been here there is very little that has changed.

In fact when he walks towards the obvious crime scene he passes a young boy working on a motor. He can feel the parts of the motor beneath his hands as well as the sticky slip of the oil. Catching the boy's eye he can see the same longing for escape that followed him for years. When Will nods to him, he can see the hope.

His name is shouted and he hurries towards Jack and the team.

They are stood at the corded perimeter of the crime scene, beyond Will can just make out the bodies.

"Which one is this?"

Jack sighs, “the third one as far as we know.”

“This is the first one with multiples.” Beverly adds.

Will sighs, an escalating killer is nothing that he wishes on anyone. But to have it happen to a town that he called home once feels a little like being gutted.

The beginnings of a headache are making themselves known between his eyes, shaking out a pill from the bottle in his pocket, dry swallowing. When he looks up he can see Beverly watching him carefully, whilst Jack seems more concerned with what Price and Zeller are doing.

“You okay?” Beverly is one of the few people were concern doesn’t sound like pity.

“Yeah, forgot what the humidity was like here.”

Beverly nods in a way that lets Will know she has filed something away for later. He shakes his head and approaches the crime scene proper. Like so many times before it has been cleared of all people except him. He can feel eyes on him that watch his every move.

Will wonders whether any of them have read Lounds’ garbage of his instability following the Stammets case. Inhaling deeply he blocks out the masses that always feel like a pack of wild dogs nipping at his heels.

When he opens his eyes all he can see is the crime scene. Briefly he thinks that this tableau, if it can even be called that, displays none of the artistry of the Chesapeake Ripper. He chides himself before focussing only on the crime scene.

There, in the skeleton of a boat are three bodies intertwined with one another. He recognises the form instantly; a figure eight knot. Knowing then that the killer has a basic knowledge of sailing but little more. Stepping closer he can see that the bodies had been placed into position before they died.

He can see it now: walking through the boat yard at night, each body unconscious and heavy. Each one would be brought and placed inside the boat, then begins the difficult work of moving limbs until they look like the knot he’s looking for.

Death is brought on relatively quickly, and with the sedative already in their bloodstream, painlessly with an insulin overdose. He isn’t concerned with leaving marks, puncture wounds are in arms and thighs, their exact cause of demise isn’t important either. What matters is that they are dead in the exact position he wants them in.

Once they’re dead he begins to weave the fabric through and around them. It’s a brocade; heavy and showing signs of age. The ends are cut off with blunted scissors, almost as if it’s been torn apart.

He begins to write along the arms: the story of the cook from the Canterbury tales, in old English. He has to concentrate though, he hesitates a few times with the pen and ink. He had

forgotten how much he had enjoyed the epos, not enough people appreciated the classics in the way that they should be.

Stepping back he enjoys the way the knot has formed and the way the tale is woven between them. He knows paint is dripping from the brush but he doesn't care, he's invisible so no one will ever be able to catch him.

A fog horn rips Will back into the present. Blinking, he focuses on the team from the BAU who are watching him with the familiar mixture of awe and distrust. The local law enforcement instead are filled with disgust and fear.

Knowing that Jack is anxious for some answers and leads, he trudges over to the group. As soon as he reaches them they disperse and begin to look for pieces of evidence.

"What've you got?"

"He's fascinated with Chaucer, the text on his arms is a particular dialect of middle english."

Jack sighs, "so we've got a literature buff."

Will rubs at the bridge of his nose, he can feel a headache forming there already.

"He feels invisible. That's why he's so brazen. All of the puncture wounds are in clearly visible places. There's finger prints in the ink and I'm sure Katz will find plenty of hairs."

"So he's either not in the system or doesn't care enough that he is."

He only nods slightly before he considers for long moments.

"I might check out some antique stores for books."

Jack turns to him. "Do you think he works at one?"

"No, but the way the text is written tells me he is getting it from an old version of it. He must've gotten the book somewhere."

"You're probably right. Did you want me to come with you?"

Will almost wants to laugh, but he manages to suppress it. Jack doesn't want to come with him, in fact Will knows that he would find it tedious and a waste of time.

"No. There's no need. I'm doing it on an off-chance that someone has had a copy."

Jack just nods along. Will can tell he has lost his focus.

"Let me know what you find. And let me know if you find anything later tonight. You can use one of the cars"

Will only nods and watches as Jack walks away and is drawn into a conversation with Price and Zeller as they are stood over the bodies.

Walking back towards the car he stops only when he hears footsteps behind him. When he turns around it's Beverly.

"Jack mentioned something about you heading to an antique store."

"Yeah."

Beverly considers him for a few moments before saying, "it looks like the text that was used comes from the Canterbury Tales."

Will only raises an eyebrow in question.

"I did a minor in literature." Beverly laughs before passing him a piece of paper with the text written out. "I know you can probably remember the text but it'll help the shopkeeper." Once again Will is surprised at the way in which Beverly tries to make him feel somewhat normal.

"Thanks."

"Don't mention it. Let me know if you have any questions."

Will nods and takes the note from her. "I'll see you later."

Beverly nods and heads back to the BAU team.

On his way to the car the boy he had seen before is still there. Will almost approaches him but there is something that stops him. He knows what it feels like to be watched by adults whilst on the boatyard. That feeling of not belonging, and the protective instinct to shield everything away from the world.

The headache keeps spreading and he has to concentrate hard as he drives. A few times Will considers calling Hannibal but he resists the urge.

***

Will finds himself at an antique bookstore tucked away on a street in between a cafe and a dry cleaner. The door is slightly ajar and when he steps inside the air is filled with the smell of old books.

The shopkeeper greets him briefly but seems to be focused on the book she is holding. He approaches the counter.

"Do you have any copies of the Canterbury Tales?"

She looks at him for long moments before saying, "let me have a look in the back. You have a look around if like."

The woman disappears through a door behind her and Will waits a few moments before he begins to inspect the shop. His first thought is that Hannibal would love the shop. Although it appears stuffed to the brim with books and small keepsakes there is still an order to it.

Walking through the aisles he notices that there are a number of books that he has seen in Hannibal's office. He stops next to one such book and pulls it out gently, flicking through the yellowed pages before placing it back on the shelf.

Will keeps going until he reaches a set of empty shelves near the back of the shop. He is about to turn back towards the counter when something catches his eye.

On the second last shelf is a small carved ornament. Will crouches down to look at it more closely. The ornament appears to be ivory. The detailing is exquisite and Will can tell that there has been a great care taken in the crafting.

Two snails are intertwined closely. The texture of the snails bodies and shells are so detailed that when he reaches out to touch it, he half expects it to feel alive.

Inexplicably all he can think of is how much Hannibal would like the ornament, so he picks it up delicately and takes it to the counter. The shopkeeper has returned to her position and she is holding a number of books.

She raises an eyebrow when she sees what Will is carrying and says, "that's a Netsuke. Carved ivory from Japan."

Will nods, filling the information away for later and decides he must buy the ornament for Hannibal, sure that the psychiatrist has a fondness for Japanese culture.

"I found some books for you." She passes over the first one. "This one is printed from the early copies as it doesn't include any of the additional versions of the cook's tale."

Will considers the book for a long moment before shaking his head. "I have some of the text here."

She reads the slip of paper before nodding to herself and taking out a book from the middle of the pile.

"That text is from the Tale of Beryn. See here -" she opens the book to a page and points out a section of the text. "Although what you have copied has a few errors. Which is understandable, it's a difficult text to comprehend."

Will reads the text carefully and he can see the slight errors in the copied text. "Do you think the person who copied this was familiar with Chaucer?"

"It's very likely, the person obviously knows about the difference between the various cook's tales, see the way in which there is a separation where one ends and the other begins."

Conjuring the image in his mind's eye, he remembers the way in which there had been a noticeable pause between writing the two phrases.

“But they seem to have been too caught up in getting the Old English grammatically correct. There are some things that just aren’t quite right, at least not according to the version we have here.”

Will carefully leafs through the book, each title page is ornately decorated. “Did you have many enquiries before mine about the tales?”

She shrugs, “a few. But nothing that springs to mind immediately. Although-“ she pauses and rummages for something underneath the counter. “Ah, here we go. There were two sales made of Canterbury Tales that include the Tale of Beryn.”

She places a large sales ledger on the desk and has her finger marking two of the entries.

“Do you have any names or address’?” The thrill is there, almost the same feeling as when he identified Hobbs’ letter.

“There is a name for this one. And here there is a phone number for the other.”

Will checks the entries carefully, and makes a note of them.

“And did you want to take the Netsuke?”

Will is shocked by the question but nods. Almost in a daze Will hands over the item. The shopkeeper wraps the item in tissue paper before handing it over.

It’s only when he has left the shop does he fully realise what he has done.

***

The wrapped gift sits on the desk in his hotel room and it feels almost accusatory. Will isn’t even certain that he will give the gift to Hannibal, wondering instead if it’s another stupid gift like the one intended for Abigail.

His phone beeps at him and he checks it quickly, a message from Hannibal asking if he needs to rearrange their standing appointment. Will sighs and fires a quick message back arranging it for the following week. He does wonder whether Hannibal is somehow able to sense when he is thinking about him, even miles apart.

The headache that has been building the entire day returns with a vengeance causing Will to stagger to the bed. Falling on top of the comforter with a heavy thud, he reaches blindly for the aspirin bottle in his pocket and swallows one pill.

Will wakes with a start drenched in sweat. The position he had fallen asleep in has caused a crick in his neck. Sitting up he looks at the clock on the wall, it’s midnight. From his calculations it’s several hours later in Virginia, sighing he stands. Stretching out his aching muscles he sits at the desk, the wrapped gift is still sat there. He doesn’t know if he’s

embarrassed by his own choice, maybe not the choice but at least Hannibal's possible reaction and what it says about Will.

Looking at the way the item had been wrapped, Will remembers the book. He picks it up gently. It's heavier than he expects, but absolutely stunning. Carefully he leafs through the pages to the tale of Beryl. Reading through the text carefully he notices all the deviations from the original text that the killer had used.

Out of curiosity he opens his laptop to see if he can find any information from the phone number and name. When he opens the device, he checks his emails. There's one from Jack with the preliminary autopsy report. As he had expected, the cause of death is heart failure. Luckily for them the killer had left traces of insulin around the injection site.

Apart from that, there had been DNA and trace fibres found. The search on the database had not produced any matches. It's not surprising to Will who had thought that would likely be the case. There is little that Will can do with the autopsy report, although he always feels a sense of vindication when his inferences are justified by the science.

Will replies to the email, stating that he had found the likely text source, and that he was looking at some possible leads. The only other email that isn't from students is from Hannibal. Curious he opens it, inside is the usual standing dinner invitation, he types out his usual decline email, he hovers over the send button for long moments.

Then he types out a different email, agreeing to the request on the condition that it is after one of his sessions, before he can rethink anything he sends the email. The reply is almost instantaneous.

Dear Will,

I'm pleasantly surprised and shall do my best to impress.

Warmest regards,

Hannibal Lecter M.D.

Surprised Will shuts his email program quickly to try and avoid analysing his actions and responding to the email. Instead he opens the browser and searches for the name. The name is just unusual enough that it brings up only a small number of results. A few he's able to discount straightaway. One is a facebook profile of a teenager in Switzerland, another is an historic figure. It leaves three possible candidates based on location and age, at least from the pictures he is able to make out.

Searching the number brings up an office address, but little in the way of names. He sighs, he doesn't forward the information on to Jack. Will hates going to interview people with Jack on his back, people don't always react well to the foreboding presence of the man, and as Jack can be dogged. It makes him excellent at ensuring there is no let up when it comes to the pursuit, but it does also mean that he often bulldozes people. The brief search has exhausted Will so he staggers back into bed, he falls easily into a dreamless sleep.

***

The next morning after a quick shower he is back on the road on the way to the office address. It's hidden round the back of a number of warehouses. There is a only a small sign that denotes the office, with little evidence as to what the office is there for. Parking the car he approaches the door, the windows are covered in a privacy film, and when he knocks on the door there is only the slight hint of movement behind them.

After long moments the door opens to reveal a slight man who is peering out suspiciously. "What do you want?"

The voice is high and reedy and seems unsure even with the aggressive tone.

"The number for this office was listed at an antique shop in relation to a purchase of The Canterbury Tales."

"And?"

"We believe the particular copy you purchased may be related to a recent series of homicides."

The door is slammed shut. Will can hear the lock click and then urgent footsteps. He considers for a moment whether there is a possibility he might find a way round the back to catch the suspect. Deciding against trying to crash through the door he follows the wall of the building to the left, and when it ends, he takes a sharpleft.

Through chain link he can see the slight man attempting to climb it. Will knows that he is much more agile than people expected of him, and he had spent many a time climbing over fences in his youth. With a few moves he clambers the fence and jumps down on the other side.

The man is looking at him with obvious fear, but he stops trying to climb the fence and instead freezes in front of Will.

"Please don't hurt me."

Will spreads his hand in an open gesture in the same way he would with frightened dogs. "We just want to ask you a few questions."

"I won't have any answers."

"That's okay, we can just talk. But you have to come with me."

"Who says I have to come with you? You're not police."

Will brings out his badge slowly. "I'm Special Agent Will Graham with the FBI."

“FBI? Why is the FBI here?”

“Local police were overwhelmed so they asked for our help.”

“I suppose that makes sense.”

“Will you come with me?”

“You promise I won’t be hurt?”

“I promise.”

The man walks over to Will, “is it far to the police station?”

“About a 30 minute car ride.”

“Can I fetch some water first?”

Will nods and the man smiles briefly before he returns to the office. Tentatively Will follows him inside. The walls of the office are covered in snippets of the Canterbury Tales, drawings that feature varying different knots, and a long list of names are plastered just above the desk. He makes a mental note to get Jack to send the team to the address as soon as they have left.

The man returns and says, “Will is a good name.”

“Never known any different.”

“I changed mine, it was Simon but that isn’t a good name. I changed it to Thomas, like the saint the pilgrims visit.”

Will only nods and leads the man over to his car.

“You sit in the back.”

Thomas only nods and slides into the seat, he seems content and that confuses Will somewhat.

Watching the man every so often in the mirror, Will notices the small tic that Thomas seems to be exhibiting. It’s almost imperceptible to the naked eye, except the slight twitch in the man’s face, it pulls at the outer corner of his lip curling it into a snarl.

The man makes no signs that he is even aware of the tic. “You’ve always enjoyed the Canterbury Tales?”

Thomas smiles broadly before saying, “yes, the literature is much better than anything modern.”

“I suppose you could look at it that way.” This invokes a full grimace from the man.

“It’s not an opinion, it’s a fact. Just like the pilgrims I am travelling to find Saint Thomas.”

“You have travel booked to England?”

“You have no idea do you? The road to St Thomas is in sacrifice.” Thomas seems to realise what he has said because he looks panicked, pressing his lips together.

“A sacrifice.” Will sighs, it’s not the craziest story he has ever heard, but as motives go it will look weak to Jack.

The rest of the journey passes in silence.

***

Back in his hotel room Will opens his laptop watching as bits and pieces of reports from the office are emailed to him. Not much else of note is found at the office, except the names matching those of the most recent victims as well as the single homicides. Based on the notes from the office that had been found scribbled on parchment paper, it became apparent that Thomas had been trying to find victims that in some way resembled the characters within the Canterbury Tales. Somehow along the way Thomas had convinced himself that the only way to achieve fulfilment was to destroy any and all pilgrims until he was the only one left.

They have found enough to convict the man, so Will books a flight home. The thought of staying any later in his hometown feels like the worst thing he could do, even if a part of him wishes to return to the harbour to find the boy. He knows that the urge is irrational, just a way to try to soothe some boyhood fantasy. The fantasy of being rescued, that someone would take a chance on him and pull him out of his life.

Luckily Will is able to find a flight that leaves that evening, he informs Jack who only answers with an affirmation that he is happy for Will to go. He is impatient to be back home with his dogs. As much as he enjoys the updates he gets from Alana about his dog, there is something about having their presence around him.

He packs the few belongings he had brought with him until all that is left is the gift. Will can feel it drawing his eyes like a neon sign, even in spite of its small size and neutral color. To avoid looking at it he stuffs it into his sports coat.

Pulling on the jacket just before he leaves feels like it is burning a hole in the pocket. Somehow it feels like a weight that he is carrying around with him. He is glad that the appointment he had rearranged with Hannibal was only in a few days time, to wait any longer would be hell.

Checking out of the hotel he gets into one of the cabs that are sat waiting outside, the further away he gets from the center of town the more relaxed Will begins to feel. The cab driver doesn’t seem to be bothered by Will’s silence. At the airport he tips her and her grateful smile makes Will glad that the interactions he has with people are usually short.

***

Landing back home and getting out of the plane feels like being able to take a breath after drowning. Every step closer to his own car makes it easier to distance himself from the case and Jack.

Driving has always been something that Will enjoys, the feeling of being able to leave everything behind is so freeing. Especially being able to listen to old songs on the radio. Some of them are ones that Will and his father would listen to whilst on the road.

After a long time on the road he turns into his drive, there in the distance is his boat. As per his instructions Hannibal had left a light on shining through one of the windows. It's exactly the way he had described it to Hannibal once, a ship in the night. Parking outside the door, he hurries up the porch. Pushing his way into the door he sinks to is knees to greet his dogs. There are excited yips, a lot of tail wagging and quite a few kisses from them.

There is something so gratifying to have their love and affection. He sinks his hands into his dogs' fur, feeling their heartbeats and heat is like stepping into a warm bath. Sometimes Will wishes he could leave his position with Jack and spend his days here alone with them.

After long moments he sends them back to their beds and they happily go, content with him being back in the house. He goes back to the car to fetch his bags and dumps them on his bed. Knowing he should unpack them straight away but instead he walks into his kitchen. The time is about right for him to feed his dogs. He is surprised when in the fridge he finds a few containers that he recognises from Hannibal.

Opening the container he finds a soup. The gesture is oddly touching to Will who is sure that he has never had someone leave him food. For now he closes the container again before he takes out the ingredients for the dog food. Carefully he prepares their food, and to their delight he places down the bowls after he calls them to him.

He drinks as he watches them, as ever the dogs seem to finish their food in the blink of an eye. Zoe trots up to him and he bends down to scratch her behind her ears. She leans into the touch.

Content, Will stands up again and looks around his kitchen. It is then that he notices the folded piece of paper on the counter. Reaching for it, he can tell from the weight of the paper and the writing that it's from Hannibal. Reading over it, he realises they are instructions to re-heating the soup as well as a list of ingredients. Taking the container out of the fridge he follows the instructions.

Like everything Hannibal has ever made and Will has tried the soup is delicious. There are pieces of what Will assumes is pork that are so tender they fall apart in his mouth. There is a sweet spicy note to the soup that he is sure he hasn't had before. He finds himself quickly devouring the entire portion, sure the noises he is making are almost obscene.

***

Will is sat in the waiting room, even though he knows that there is not a patient in Hannibal's diary before him, Hannibal is always insistent that their sessions start at the time agreed and not a minute sooner. Usually it helps him, this waiting for Hannibal but today he is filled with a restless energy.

He can feel the Netsuke pressing against his chest in the inner pocket of his jacket. If he didn't know better Will would think the item was burning a hole to his chest, the heat is imagined only, but the weight of it isn't.

The grandfather clock in the waiting room strikes exactly 7:30, it makes Will jump. Before the chime has rung out Hannibal is opening the door to his office. Will stands, rubbing his hands against the leg of his pants. Hannibal notices, because he always does, but Will can tell from the slight pause that he is trying to catalogue the action for further perusal. He isn't sure when Hannibal might circle back to it, but he knows he will.

Entering the office is a little like seeing Wolf Trap, a safe space, a quiet bubble away from the noise of everyone else. Surveying the office he takes a seat in his usual seat, Hannibal in his usual unhurried way takes the seat opposite him.

They sit in silence. Usually this silence is enjoyable for Will but this time he can barely sit still. It feels like there are ants crawling over his skin, a strong compulsion in him to get up and move. Hannibal is watching him as he does so often.

"What was the weather like?"

"Hot. Humid. It's like being slowly boiled alive. You don't notice it at first, almost as if you are a frog they put in a tepid pot before slowly turning up the heat."

"Interesting that you think of boiling frogs, I've heard it's a delicacy in New Orleans."

Will shrugs, "that might have been the case. It was never something I enjoyed. It's a certain cruelty to the act that I found distasteful."

"A great number of things could be seen as distasteful."

"Cruelty especially. But I wonder what do you find distasteful?"

"Rudeness. And a great number of other slights."

"I wonder what I could do that would slight you."

"I am sure that would take quite some doing." Hannibal flashes one of his rare smiles. "Tell me of the case."

Instantly Will can feel the restlessness return. He suppresses the urge to begin playing with the sleeves of his shirt. Hannibal raises an eyebrow in question. A nervous laugh escapes Will.

“It was a boatyard, where we found them.”

“Like one from your childhood?”

“One from my childhood.”

Hannibal doesn’t say anything. There are long moments were neither of them say anything. Unusually for him, Will feels the urge to speak.

“There was a boy.” Will catches Hannibal’s eyes for a moment. “Not one of the victims. He was working there, just like I used to.”

“You were transported back.”

“Yes, I could feel the slip of oil beneath my fingers. Remembered the little tricks that would make it easier to fix a stubborn part.”

“You do not mention anything about scent. I have always found scent to be particularly evocative.”

“It was, even before I saw the boy it was the smell that lead me back. It was the mixture of the sharp sting of gas, the fish and the water.”

Hannibal considers him, “you are worried that you will never quite leave that boy behind.”

Will doesn’t answer him for long moments. “That boy died a long time ago.”

“Perhaps, but our pasts never truly leave us.”

“Tell me, Dr. Lecter, do you often think of your past?”

“It is not something I dwell on, but I know that it made me what I am today.”

Hannibal folds his hands, and leans back. It’s only when he’s moved does Will realise he has copied the motion.

“Have you read The Canterbury Tales?”

“I must confess I have not read the entire works, but a few of the stories are familiar.”

"Our killer had, in fact he was obsessed with it.”

“An interesting obsession to have.”

“Quite. He was sure that he was on a quest to complete the pilgrimage. But only by killing the characters in the stories.”

“An interesting delusion. Remind me, the pilgrimage is to see the burial site of which saint?”

“Saint Thomas, the bishop killed by Henry II’s men.”

“I thought that might have been the case.”

“The last scene he had left us was a knot of three people, tied with brocade and the Cook’s tale written on to their skin with ink.”

“How did you find him?”

“The text had been in Old English. Beverly told me that it would be a particular version of the text.”

“Katz is always full of surprises.”

“That she is. A minor in literature she told me.”

“So how does one find a man obsessed with The Canterbury Tales?”

Will’s mouth goes dry. He takes a sip from the glass on the table next to him.

“An antique store perhaps.” Hannibal says after long moments.

“Exactly that.”

“What is it about antique stores that has you so restless?”

“At the store there were two sales, one had a name and the other a phone number only.”

“Auspicious to leave only a phone number for such an innocuous purchase.”

“It reminded me a little of finding the letter for Hobbs.”

“So what did you find?”

“An office address, in an industrial estate. I’m still not entirely sure what the office was actually for.”

“He might have been a writer who wanted a quiet place to write.”

“Maybe, but what I found was more than enough evidence to be able to put him away for a long time.”

“You did not stay for the wrap up?”

“I couldn’t.”

“That I understand.” Hannibal stands, “now I believe I promised you dinner.”

Will also stands and nods, he pats down his jacket and feels the box again, as if burned he jerks his hand away.

“Something the matter?”

Will shakes his head. “I can follow you in my car.”

“Nonsense. I will drive you there and back.”

“I don’t want to impose.”

“Let me drive you there, and if you truly insist you could always get a taxi back.”

Will nods and follows Hannibal out of the office and to his car.

***

The drive passes in companionable silence. The car is warm, and Will begins to feel a little tired. The box presses against his chest when he shifts in his seat, his heartbeat rackets up. He shifts in his seat and again, feeling Hannibal’s gaze on him he tries to settle himself.

At Hannibal’s house he isn’t able to get out of the car before Hannibal has gotten out and opens the door for him. He can’t help the heat that flushes his face. Thankfully Hannibal doesn’t say anything.

Hannibal leads him into the house and to the kitchen. Once there he takes off his jacket and rolls up his sleeves. It is the most casual Will has seen Hannibal, it oddly suits him especially in his kitchen. The kitchen is all stainless steel, and from what he can tell it contains professional equipment. It is the first time he has been invited into the kitchen, and Will feels incredibly privileged.

“Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Be my sous-chef?”

“I just hope I can meet your standards.”

“I have seen the lures you have made whilst I was feeding the dogs, you have a deft hand.”

Will feels warmth in his chest at the praise. “Thank you, they’re incredibly relaxing to make, I usually use things I find around the woods by my house.”

“They are truly stunning. Now if you could chop these.” Hannibal passes him a board with a knife and a few carrots. “Thin slices please.”

“You’ve got it.”

He begins the task, relaxing into it. It's easy to get lost in the motions, and it allows his mind to clear slightly, taking it away from everything in New Orleans. Behind him he can hear the sizzle of something as Hannibal adds it to the pan.

When he finishes chopping the carrots he slides it over to Hannibal who gives him a warm smile. Hannibal adds the carrots to the pan and Will watches him for long moments. He seem unperturbed by Will's staring.

Will only notices then that the play of Hannibal's muscles beneath his shirt is mesmerising. There are long moments before Hannibal turns around to him, "would you mind trying this?"

Hannibal is holding a small teaspoon out to him, carefully Will takes it off him and tries the swallow of soup. Rich smoke floods his palate. There is something familiar in the flavours.

"Are you making gumbo?"

"Trying to at least."

"Succeeding, you've given it additional depth somehow."

Hannibal smiles again, there is something in his expression that is surprisingly fond. Will doesn't quite know what to make of that realisation.

"Why are you making gumbo?"

"I had hoped that I would be able to create something from your home, and hopefully create some pleasant association."

Will is incredibly touched by the gesture, it is the first time that anyone has gone out of their way to make something for him.

"Thank you, Hannibal, truly."

"Well then to dinner."

Hannibal leads him to the dining room, and gestures for Will to sit. "You wait here, I will fetch our plates and some wine."

Will looks around the room, it's both everything he had expected from Hannibal but also nothing like what he had imagined. One wall is entirely covered in green plants, when he looks more closely Will realises that they are fresh herbs. On the other wall is a painting, when he recognises the painting he can't help but flush slightly. It is an odd choice for the dining room, but it fits with Hannibal.

Hannibal returns with two plates, "admiring the art?"

"Yes, an unusual choice; Leda and the swan. But I can't help but think that it suits you."

Hannibal smiles and places the plate in front of him, "I've always thought there is something so beautiful about the hedonism of the Greek gods."

Will makes a non-committal noise, “there are versions of the story that put hedonism above all else, even the autonomy of Leda.”

“Ah, I see you have mostly heard the stories where it is forceful. The version I first heard was about a slow seduction.”

Hannibal takes a seat opposite Will, with the candles on the table and the intimate setting it could almost be mistaken for a date.

“Now”.He gestures at the plates, “Bon appetite.”

Will takes his spoon and dips it into the dish. Taking a large bite he can’t help but moan at the burst of flavour on his tongue.

“You’ve outdone yourself.”

“A challenge well met then. It is not the first choice I made for our first shared dinner. I had visions of a grand feast, but then I realised you would find it a little too gauche.”

“I appreciate it, but everything you have made so far has been delicious so maybe I can be persuaded. As long as there are no other people.”

“Not even Uncle Jack?”

“I think the less time I spend with Jack the happier we will all be.”

Hannibal chuckles at that, and raises a glass. “To being alone.”

“To being alone.”

The rest of the meal is spent in comfortable silence. Will finishes his plate and when Hannibal stands, he does too. He takes his plate, and at Hannibal’s questioning look he says, “my parents taught me manners. You eat at someone’s house you help clear up.”

Hannibal smiles, “you stay seated. I see it as part of my duties as host.”

Will doesn’t sit back down, and Hannibal merely shrugs. There is something fascinating about the way that here in is home Hannibal seems almost more human.

He feels sleepy, in a way the food and company have relaxed him far better than anything else has for a long time. They go back into the kitchen and only then does Will relinquish his hold on the plate. It is placed in a dishwasher that is tucked away in a cabinet. Will considers the things he is learning about Hannibal. The man is far more human than he had ever expected, whilst at the same time being unpredictable in his actions.

He decides then. “Hannibal?”

“Yes, Will?”

“There was something else I didn’t tell you about New Orleans.”

“I had wondered, but thought that you would tell me in your own time.”

“That’s accurate.”

“I know you will only ever tell me things when you are ready to tell me.”

Will is shocked at how good it feels to be seen, something that he is sure no one else has ever been able to do. For someone to know that he doesn’t enjoy being interrogated by other people. It’s strange to him. He fidgets with the hem of his jacket.

“In the antique shop where I found the books there was something else I saw.” He takes a deep breath, pulls out the box from his pocket. “It made me think of you.”

He places it on the counter in front of Hannibal. It’s a little dented in one corner, but Hannibal doesn’t seem to mind.

Hannibal picks up the box, he looks perplexed at the gesture. “It’s nothing really, just something I saw whilst I was looking for the books.”

“You did not have to do this, Will.”

“I wanted to.”

Hannibal lifts the lid carefully, like so much of what he does it is done with the utmost care. He feels warmth spread through him, and it surprises him.

Will watches with rapt attention as Hannibal begins to unwrap the tissue paper. He is nervous, as he isn’t sure what Hannibal’s reaction might be. He knows it’s unlikely that there will be a big reaction. What he knew of the man was that Hannibal was reserved and careful with what he showed to the outside world.

Hannibal freezes in his motions. That was not something Will expects, he looks to Hannibal’s face, he sees surprise and a surprising amount of emotion. It softens his own expression. Fondness, that is the emotion he is feeling, it surprises him.

“Oh, Will.” Hannibal sounds choked up, his voice is thick.

“Did I do something wrong?”

“You did everything right.” Hannibal picks up the Netsuke. “How did you know?”

Will flushes, “I saw it and thought of you.”

Hannibal turns to face him, he is holding it close to his chest. “I thought it was gone forever.”

“Gone forever?”

“It had been taken. Someone at school must have been the one to steal it from my room.”

“You mean to say this used to be yours?"

There are tears in Hannibal’s eyes, he is looking at Will with an expression that he had only seen a few times before. Something in Will breaks, he can almost see the ghosts of Hannibal’s past. He feels anger on Hannibal’s behalf, he can see it so clearly; a boy that was in a strange land who never quite fit in with his peers. A perceived easy target in the same way Will had been.

“Tell me about it.” Will says gently.

“Lady Murasaki had it on her vanity. I used to spend long hours watching her get ready.” Hannibal is stroking his fingers over the ornament. “It was after I had moved in with her and my uncle.”

Will can see it so clearly, Hannibal as a shy young boy, watching in fascination.

“It was my favourite part of the day, she would walk me through every part of the routine. She told me all about her home and what these ornaments are.”

“Do they have a particular meaning?”

“Not really, they were there to show the artistry, usually given as gifts.” Hannibal’s knuckles are almost white with how tightly he is clutching it. “It is through her that I began to see the beauty in the world around us. I never wanted to stop spending time with her.”

“Your uncle had other plans.”

“He did indeed, he thought that I needed other influences around me. And a child is not exactly conducive to having a life.”

Hannibal sighs slightly, “join me in the living room for a drink?”

Will nods and follows Hannibal into the living room. He hardly pays attention to the decor, too focussed on watching Hannibal. He feels as if they are on a precipice.

When he is sat on a sofa Hannibal hands him a tumbler with a light amber whiskey. He takes a sip of the drink, it is much smoother than anything he has ever bought himself to drink. Hannibal sits next to him, an arm’s reach away.

“Lady Murasaki gave it to me on the day that I left their house. She said it was something to remind me of the beauty of the world in a dismal environment like a boarding school.”

“Boarding school must have been rough.”

“It was. A shy small boy is an easy target. Especially one that does not speak the language as well as the others.”

Will watches him for long moments. It's almost as if the moment he started telling his story Hannibal couldn't stop.

"I had learned earlier in life that staying silent was easier, it made the pain pass quicker." Hannibal takes a sip of his own drink. "It was during a lesson, that they must have taken it."

Will reaches out almost compulsively, but lets his hand fall back.

Hannibal gives him a small smile. "I searched through their rooms, but I never found it. One of them must have given it to someone else during a home visit. Then somehow it ended up in New Orleans."

"It's strange isn't it?" Will says. "That both our pasts would intersect in such an innocuous way."

Hannibal is looking at him with an odd look on his face.

"Tell me, Will, do you still have headaches? And the sleepwalking, is that still happening?"

The change of topic is jarring. "They seem to be becoming more frequent. There are gaps in my day. I'll wake up somewhere without knowing how I got there. Why do you ask?"

"I was just thinking your symptoms remind me of an illness that I have not seen in a long time."

Will huffs a laugh, "you're saying that I'm not just losing my mind?"

"I think it might be a possibility." Hannibal takes another sip of his drink, "I have a colleague that I went to medical school with. I trust his ability. Do you consent to going to see him."

"At this point I would give anything for a good night's sleep."

Hannibal considers him for long moments before, "nothing is more important to me than your wellbeing."

It fills Will with warmth, "thank you, Hannibal. Truly, I don't know what I would do without you."

Hannibal smiles warmly. "It's strange, seeing this again after all these years."

He is shifting closer to Will and Will holds his breath. The air seems charged with electricity. "You gave me a rare gift." Hannibal breaths.

Will is the one to bridge the distance between them, he cups Hannibal's cheek with one hand. It seems to fit his hand perfectly, he is breathing heavily. Then he is pulling Hannibal close with his other hand. The first touch of their lips is gentle, explorative.

Hannibal lets out a soft sigh when they part. There is a smile on his lips. "It seems I can never truly quite predict you, Will."

Will doesn't answer instead choosing to kiss him again. He opens his mouth allowing Hannibal access, the play of their tongues is gentle. Both happy to explore the other slowly. The kiss is unhurried, it fills Will's chest with warmth. When Hannibal tangles a hand in his hair and tugs gently Will moans into his mouth. Hannibal makes a noise that could only be described as a purr.

They break apart again, but stay close. Hannibal's forehead rests against his. "I had hoped."

"Hope is sometimes a fool's errand."

"But only sometimes." Hannibal is smiling, and from the ache in his cheeks Will knows he is too.

Will brushes another kiss against Hannibal's lips before moving back. "Everything in me wants me to continue. But I need to get back to Wolf Trap, the dogs need to be walked."

Hannibal sighs before pulling back slightly. "I understand. Allow me to make an appointment for you?"

He nods his agreement, and brushes a kiss against the back of Hannibal's hand. "I hope it won't take too long to find out what's wrong with me."

"I am certain we will find something."

Will stands and Hannibal follows him to the door. On the doorstep Hannibal pulls him close again, he kisses him deeply, and it curls Will's toes in pleasure. The slight spike in arousal is new, and by the way that Hannibal inhales deeply, Will almost believes that Hannibal is able to smell it on him.

"I really have to go now." He is reluctant about leaving but he knows his dogs need him.

"Join me for a dinner another night?"

"Yes, perhaps after the appointment."

"I will make sure of it."

Will kisses him again and then walks down the steps and to a waiting cab. The cab drive to the car is quick, paying the man he gets into his car. Once he has closed the door behind him Will is able to finally breathe a little easier, his lips feel swollen and the giddiness makes him feel like a teenager.

The drive back to Will's house passes in a blur. When he parks the car and opens the door he can hear the dogs' bark. Opening the front door they come streaming out of the door and into the front yard. He watches them relieve themselves, deciding he is too tired to walk them properly. Their excited yips follow him into the house as he makes his way into the kitchen.

Once he prepares the food and sets the bowls down they come running back into the house, their nails clicking against the wooden floor. As always they wolf down their food, before

they walk back into the living room. Following them into the room he strips out of his clothes before collapsing onto the bed.

Zoe jumps up followed by Buster. They settle around him, and usually he would send them off the bed. This evening however he is glad for their warmth so he lets them stay. He worms his way underneath the covers, and once he has stopped moving they curl up on either side of him.

He falls quickly and easily into a dreamless sleep.

***

Will wakes the next morning with Winston lying across his chest, unusual for him is that he doesn't wake drenched in sweat. He prods Winston gently, who shifts slightly until he is lying next to Will. He tries recalling dreams of the night and finds that there was a lack of nightmares. The dogs watch him as he stands up, and goes into the bathroom.

Glancing in the mirror he is surprised to see that the dark circles underneath his eyes have faded somewhat. The shower he takes is perfunctory and he dresses quickly.

After feeding the dogs and letting them out for their morning exercise he gets into his car and heads for Quantico.

The first lecture he holds he can hear the whispers of the students. He catches the words "maybe he got laid" before he silences them. He talks them through the case that he had just worked on. Will is thankful that the questions they ask are smarter than they usually are. When they file out of the room Will sits down at his desk heavily. Checking his phone he sees that he has a message from Hannibal. It's purely a date and time along with an address.

The appointment is set for the following day, and he sends a few emails to arrange cover for his lectures, Alana agrees to cover a few of them. She asks a few questions as to why he is taking the day off. When he answers that he has a doctor's appointment, she replies that she is glad that he is looking after himself.

His next class files in and he starts his next lecture. With exams coming up a few students stay after to ask questions about the papers. He gives his usual answers, that if they want to pass the exam they should look over their notes and his slides. Generally Will is happy to answer questions during lectures, but the questions before exams are always about students trying to get ahead of the others by trying to work out the exact area to study.

After the last student finally understands he will not be giving them an advantage over the others and leaves, Alana enters the room.

"Exam season really does bring out the worst in them, doesn't it?"

Will smiles and nods, “you’d think that they hadn’t learned anything from the many lectures they attended.”

“I don’t think it’s that. Every single one of them is so anxious about their future, and getting into the FBI to become an agent, and they need top grades to do so.”

“I know that,” Will says a little indignantly. “My issue is that they think I am swayed to favouritism.”

Alana laughs, “I dread to think what you are like with your favourite students. You probably work them even harder.”

“I plead the fifth. What did you come in here for?”

“I wanted to catch up with you, I don’t think in the entire time I’ve known you, you’ve ever willingly gone to the doctor.”

“I go occasionally.”

“To your mandatory physicals. Which happen once a year. So why the voluntary visit?”

“Hannibal persuaded me.”

“Now that must have taken some persuasion.”

“He thinks there might be some underlying cause to my sleepwalking.”

Alana sighs, “how have you not mentioned the sleepwalking to Jack?”

“I have, but I told him it was okay, that I could continue.”

“Will, you need to ignore Jack sometimes, he’s too focussed on the ripper to consider anything else around him.”

“It’s fine. I’ll stop when I need to.”

Alana shrugs. It’s an argument they have had on multiple occasions, and it’s clear that they won’t make any headway.

“I’ll email you some slides and notes for tomorrow.”

“Thanks, Will, I appreciate it. And I am glad you’re going to the doctor’s.” Will watches as Alana leaves the room. His phone pings him, it’s another message from Hannibal.

Seeing it sends a flutter of warmth through him. The message asks Will to pack an overnight bag, and that Hannibal will pick him up from his home.

Anticipation curls in the pit of his stomach together with arousal. The attraction to Hannibal isn’t a surprise to him, objectively he has always known the man is attractive. What surprises him is the speed and depth of the attraction.

He resists the urge to call, there is something about Hannibal that makes him feel seen in a way that no one had ever been able to do. A kindred spirit in more ways than not.

***

He wakes in the middle of the woods near his house. Winston is stood next to him completely alert to the surrounding. He's wearing a sports coat over his t-shirt. His socks are soaked, which is strange as Will doesn't remember pulling on socks before going to bed.

A light through the trees startles him slightly when he turns towards it. Covering his eyes he walks back towards the house. When he reaches the house he realises that his car light is on.

The motor is running, and he goes to turn it off. Inside the car is his briefcase which is overflowing with various items of clothing. Grabbing the bag he goes back into his house. Once inside Will feels the chill from being outside for so long, he takes off the sports coat and instead pulls on pyjama pants, as well as a sweater.

Dumping out the contents of the bag, he takes a long look at what his addled brain had packed. The bulk of it appears to be socks and various t-shirts. Will wonders why his brain had decided on those items in particular. He takes the socks and t-shirts and puts them back into the right drawers. He sends a message to Hannibal, not really expecting an answer from him.

He is surprised that he gets a response. The message is succinct, concern for his well being and an assurance that they would soon hopefully have clarity as to the cause of his symptoms. Will catches on the "we" in Hannibal's message, it fills him with a sense of belonging that he hasn't felt in a long time. He longs for Hannibal acutely, almost as if he is a limb that Will is missing. The ferocity of his feeling frightens Will, he is not sure how long it's been since he has liked someone in this way. No - not liked, loved, supplies a part of him that he doesn't usually allow any time.

It's odd to him, the way that Hannibal has carved a space into his life so totally. He thanks Hannibal in a message and with the warm feeling in his heart he goes back to bed.

***

The alarm jerks him awake, he feels almost hungover. It is a mixture of the lack of sleep and the realisation of the previous night. He rubs the sleep from his eyes, and staggers to the shower. The shower he takes perfunctory, merely there to clean himself as quickly as possible before he dresses himself. Hannibal had let him know that he would be picking him up.

Will packs an overnight bag. He feeds the dogs. The actions don't take enough time, and being frightened of being idle. He begins to tidying the living room, it is mostly the parts of the motor he last worked on. Will is glad for the distraction.

It is only when the dogs begin barking that he realises a car is approaching the house, he sends the dogs to their beds and they follow the order. Will opens the door and sees Hannibal, he can barely contain the smile on his face. The answering smile that Hannibal gives him is radiant.

They crash into each other like a wave crashing against the rocks. He is kissing Hannibal and it feels like coming home. When they part Hannibal chuckles, "if I had known you would react like that I would have come here earlier."

Will laughs and Hannibal beams, "I will endeavour to hear that laugh again, as often as I can."

It is strange to have someone so concerned with his well being and happiness. It delights the deepest part of him. Hannibal is a strange man but is exceedingly kind to him. Looking into Hannibal's eyes is like drowning, but it isn't scary in the same way as it is looking into anyone else's eyes. In fact he finds it rather comforting.

"I can't promise anything."

"I like the challenge."

"I believe we had an appointment?"

"That we do. Come with me." Hannibal laces his hand with Will's and Will squeezes in answer. He is pulled towards Hannibal's car and Hannibal opens the door for him. The car is warm, and Will is glad for the warmth. Hannibal gets in beside him. "Shall we?"

Will nods his assent, dread fills him. What if Hannibal is wrong and his symptoms are indeed him slowly losing his mind. "They will find something." Hannibal sounds so sure, almost like he knew exactly what Will was thinking.

"There is a sweetness in your scent, something I have sometimes detected on patients with a fever."

"You smelled me?"

"Difficult to avoid."

"I suppose so."

"We have been relatively close these last few visits."

"I noticed the change in your scent in my living room. Difficult to do sometimes when there is the horrible scent of your cologne."

"I always thought it smelled nice."

“Nice in its own right maybe but it did not mix well with your own unique scent.”

“My scent?”

“Yes it is quite something.”

“That makes it sound like I reek.”

“Not at all, I find it pleasant.”

“Should I find a different cologne?”

“I like you just as you are.”

Will feels a blush rising in his cheeks, it is an odd sort of pleasure, that warms him even more than the heat of the car.

The drive is passed in comfortable silence, a few minutes into the drive Hannibal laces his fingers with Will’s again. This easy affection that Hannibal doles upon him, he finds easy to accept. Which surprises him, but for once Will decides to ignore the unease. The part of him that questions the affection, this time he wants to ignore it, wants to bury it deep inside himself.

***

The clanking of the magnets is like thunder, even with the music blaring over the headphones they had given him. “Just a little longer.” The voice is disembodied, almost as if it is from somewhere inside himself.

After a few more minutes the gurney retracts from the machine, and Will is blinking in the light of the room. The nurse smiles at him and then takes him towards the antechamber, where he changes back into his clothes. Out in the hall Hannibal is sat waiting on one of the chairs. Will knows that the seats are not comfortable so he is touched by Hannibal waiting for him.

“How long do you think it will take until they have results?”

“Last I remember it takes them about half an hour for them to look at all the images. But it has been many years since I have been involved in the analysis of the images. The technology has no doubt improved since then.”

“So what do we do? Go to the canteen and eat?”

Hannibal looks affronted by the suggestion and Will cannot help the chuckle that escapes him. “I was joking. I am sure that you have something to eat that your brought with you.”

“You know me better than most.”

“Only most?”

Hannibal pauses for a moment, “you are right as ever, my darling boy. You know me better than all of them.”

Will beams, it is gratifying to hear it.

“Achilles wished all Greeks would die, so that he and Patroclus could conquer Troy alone.”

Hannibal looks at him with such fondness in his eyes, and Will knows that his own reflect the same.

They walk back to his car and from the trunk Hannibal takes out two containers that are the same as the ones he had brought with him all that time ago in Minnesota.

“I am sure Sutcliffe will allow us to use the staff room to heat and eat these.”

“What have you made for me?”

“That would ruin the surprise would it not?”

“I’m not usually one for surprises, but I find myself unable to resist yours.”

“Then I hope you will enjoy this one.”

They return to the hospital and then into the staff room. Where Hannibal inspects the facilities, he looks disappointed. “Well I suppose needs must.”

He lifts the lids from the containers, even cold the smell is incredible. Hannibal places both containers into the microwave and starts it.

Will takes the opportunity to look around the room, half eaten meals and half drunk cups of coffee are strewn across every surface. “Are they always like this?”

“Oh yes, never a day goes by when you have a break and then as soon as you start eating the pager will be summoning you to an emergency.”

“Not very conducive to a healthy life.”

“It was not, I grew tired of it. That was when I turned my hand to psychiatry and used my experience as a surgeon in the culinary arts.”

The microwave pings behind him and Hannibal turns towards it. Hannibal places both the dishes on the table and gestures for Will to sit.

“This smells delicious. What are we eating?”

“A simple stew, something from my home. You recalling tales of your home made me nostalgic for my own home: *saltibarsciai* . It is sometimes eaten cold in the summer, when it

is cold it is a shocking pink, a symbol of the coming summer."

"What gives it the color?"

"Beetroot. It has a bad reputation, but I have always enjoyed using it."

Will dips the spoon Hannibal gives him into the stew and takes a taste. "This is delicious. I don't know why I am surprised, everything you have made for me is delicious."

"You flatter me."

"No flattery, a simple statement of facts."

They eat until they have finished the bowls. After they finish, Will takes the bowls and rinses them in the sink. He is filled with a restless energy, so begins to clean and tidy the room. It is satisfying to do, watching as the room begins to look cleaner and less cluttered.

"You are nervous."

"I can't stop thinking that perhaps there is something wrong with me."

"I am sure that the thing that is wrong with you is an illness we can cure."

"But what if it isn't?"

"Do you trust me?"

"Of course."

"We will weather it together. Whatever it is. But I am sure that it is a neurological issue. After all you are perfectly sane."

"All of these dreams I have, the visions of the stag. Surely they cannot be because of some illness?"

Hannibal stands and gently takes Will's face with his hands. "Will you cannot imagine the amount of illnesses that can cause hallucinations. We will wait and see what Sutcliffe has to say."

He kisses Hannibal gently, filled with gratefulness. Leaning his forehead against Hannibal's he is content to share the breath between them.

A clearing throat interrupts them and they break apart to look at the figure. Will recognises the man, it's Dr. Sutcliffe. Hannibal smiles and Will can see that he doesn't truly mean it. Maybe it's because Will has seen a true smile on his face and can see the difference now.

"Would you come to my office please?"

Will follows the doctor out of the room, Hannibal holding his hand, and back to the man's office. He forgot how much he hated hospitals, the fluorescent lights that make everything

look sickly. That smell of disinfectant that stings his nose with each inhale, then there is a persistent odour that Will imagines must be disease.

“This must be hell for your sensitive nose.” Will whispers.

Hannibal smiles briefly, “I have, over the years, forgotten how bad it is. But I can ignore it as I have something else to think about.”

“I wonder, if there are parts of your mind palace that have similar corridors to this.”

“Try as I might there will always be a part of me that remembers these halls, sometimes fondly, sometimes not.”

Dr Sutcliffe motions for Will and Hannibal to sit at the desk. He goes around to sit in his own chair. Will scans the office, there isn’t a lot that is revealed about the man from looking. But one thing Will is certain of, the doctor does not have good news.

“So we think the symptoms you described to me are neurological in origin.” Will feels the relief fill him, no matter what the man says next; he is not insane. “However we have found indications of encephalitis.”

Hannibal nods slightly, Will knows then that was what Hannibal had expected. Having heard the term before he knows it’s bad.

“So what do we do?”

“I’d like for you to have a lumbar puncture, that way we can rule out the exact cause.”

“And then?” Will is anxious to start treatment if it is indeed the case that his symptoms are a result of an illness rather than his own slipping sanity.

“If I might interject?” Hannibal is leaning forward, “Will, the treatment will depend on the type of encephalitis. Some of them will be incredibly difficult for you.”

Will looks at Hannibal, “I won’t inflict this on you, Hannibal.”

Sutcliffe scoffs, Will can feel the drop in temperature in the room, and the stare Hannibal is giving Sutcliffe can only be described as deadly.

Hannibal turns fully to Will and says, “I will be there every step of the way.”

Will smiles at Hannibal before turning back to Sutcliffe, “can we do the lumbar puncture now?”

The doctor sighs and says to Will, “yes, go down to the first floor and talk to the nurses in Neurology.”

The temperature drops even lower and Will can tell that this is a transgression Hannibal will not easily forgive, if at all.

He stands and leaves the office gently guiding Hannibal out of the room.

“I had forgotten how unpleasant Sutcliffe is, although I feel he has gotten worse.”

“Maybe we can switch doctors?”

“Unfortunately he is the best here, and I want the best care for you.”

Will rubs his temples. “I just wish I could make you happy, and I don’t want you to have to interact with him.”

“You do make me happy, and I can tolerate a man such as Sutcliffe. For you.”

Will squeezes Hannibal’s hand gently and kisses him. “Let’s get this over and done with.”

The nurse is friendly as she tells him to lie down on the gurney with his knees to his chest, she administers the local anesthetic and it hurts. Hannibal is squeezing his hand and watching every movement of his face. Will smiles up at him.

After long moments the nurse pushes the needle into his back, although it doesn’t hurt he can feel the pressure. He squeezes Hannibal’s hand hard enough that both their fingers turn white. Hannibal seems unperturbed and whispers something to Will which he can’t hear. At the questioning look he says slightly louder, “it’ll be over in a second.”

“He’s right. I’ve managed to collect the sample. I just need you stay still for the next 45 minutes. Results should be back with us in the next 6 hours.”

“So we need to return tomorrow?” Will asks.

“I am sure Sutcliffe will see us this evening. In fact I will make sure of it.” Hannibal says watching the nurse.

“I know Dr. Sutcliffe will make time for an old friend like you, Dr. Lecter. You probably don’t remember me, we used to work together in the ER.”

“Of course I remember, I remember every face. How are the family?”

“Well you know, making it through, like the rest of us. It’s a difficult time at the moment.”

“I am sure good things will come. Are you still training to be a nurse practitioner?”

“I was but then we ran out of money. Training is expensive when the hospital is so understaffed.”

Will recognises the look on Hannibal’s face, he rubs a soothing circle with his thumb.

“I will have a word with Sutcliffe, you were always one of the best nurses I worked with.”

“Thank you, Dr. Lecter.” She says, and Will can hear the smile in her voice. She leaves the room and Will watches Hannibal.

“That was kind.”

“She is very competent. I did enjoy working with her, and kindness begets kindness.”

“Just as cruelty begets cruelty.” Will says. Hannibal beams down at him. “I feel rather vulnerable like this. With my ass hanging out.”

“It is a rather fine ass.”

“Hannibal, I am supposed to be lying still, how can I when you talk to me like that?”

“Maybe I just like seeing you squirm.” Hannibal bends down and kisses him. It curls Will’s toes and he wants to sit up and pull Hannibal to him. But he resists the urge.

Hannibal pulls back and sits back in his chair. “Tell me something.”

Will sighs, “there isn’t much to tell. I am sure by now you know almost everything about me.”

“There must be some mysteries to Will Graham that I have yet to unlock.”

“Did I tell you about the day my mother left?”

“Until now you have been reluctant to talk about your mother. What changed?”

“I trust you.”

“Your trust means a great deal to me, Will.”

“And there is no one I would rather trust.”

“You honor me, but you are deflecting again.”

Will laughs, “yes you’re right.” He takes a deep breath. “I was young, maybe 4 or 5. It’s one of my earliest memories. The day she left. It changed father, before I always remembered him as a patient and kind man.”

Hannibal is watching him carefully. “I remember coming home, she had put on perfume, the one I gave her. She turned to father and said, ‘I can’t do this anymore.’ And she walked out.”

“She never gave an explanation. You resented her for it.”

“No she didn’t and I hated her for it. She just left.” There are tears in Will’s eyes and Hannibal wipes them away with his thumb. His touch is gentle and Will leans into it. “I found out later that she had fallen in love with someone else. She was pregnant.”

“So somewhere out there you have a half-sibling.”

“A half-sister. The daughter she always wanted.”

“The rejection stung twice, she left and started the life she truly wanted.”

“My father fell into despair. Drank himself into a stupor most nights. Worked when he was able, which wasn’t often. I learnt quickly which type of mood he was in.”

“You also learnt how to work.”

“Someone had to bring in money.”

“You are sorry for leaving him.”

“I had to get out as soon as I was old enough.”

“So you joined the police force.”

“Until I was stabbed in the shoulder.”

“I noticed that.”

“How?”

“It is in the way you move. You protect your shoulder. I was a doctor remember?”

Will laughs, “that’s true. After I recovered I tried joining the FBI, wanted to be part of something bigger I suppose. Didn’t quite make it. Too unstable.”

“So they asked you to teach?”

“Yeah, said I had a unique mind that wasn’t suited to the field but knew so much about criminal psychology that I should teach the new recruits.”

He laughs bitterly, “the irony wasn’t lost on me either.”

Hannibal doesn’t answer only considers him. “I think your time is up. You can sit back up.”

“It’ll be good to stretch my legs.” He sits up, feeling a little woozy. Hannibal reaches out a hand, and Will takes it. He is helped up to his feet and he falls against Hannibal. Now standing Will wraps his arms around him and kisses him deeply.

A hand is on his bare ass and squeezes, he breathes heavily, his chest heaving. “We really shouldn’t. Not here at least.” He says when they break apart.

“You are right, you deserve fine sheets and a proper bed. Then I will take my time taking you apart piece by piece.”

Will flushes, he can feel the beginnings of arousal stirring in him. If he wasn’t anxious to have Hannibal all to himself he might have tried to persuade Hannibal otherwise, but he steps back out of reach.

“What shall we do for the next 5 hours?”

“You get dressed, I will find something to do.”

Will fetches the clothes from where they are lying on a chair, he dresses quickly, conscious of Hannibal's heated gaze on him. He curses how quickly he flushes because he feels as though his face is beet red.

Once he is dressed he turns back to face Hannibal who is smiling, "you've found something?"

"There is a gallery not far from here. If that is something you want to do?"

"You're taking me on a proper date?"

"I am indeed. If you will let me?"

"I'm not opposed to the idea."

"Follow me, it's only a short way away but I know that you should not be walking much after the procedure."

"Are you going to carry me?"

"As appealing as the idea is, I think the car might be better suited."

"I suppose you're right."

They walk to Hannibal's car where Hannibal opens the door for him. He is glad they are driving because he is already sore from the short walk. The journey is passed without any talk between them, Hannibal's left hand is intertwined with his, and he feels like the luckiest man alive. That he has the company of Hannibal by his side.

Once they park, Hannibal kisses him deeply, gently untangling his hand from Will's. Will makes a questioning noise and Hannibal shushes him. Undoing Will's pants, he doesn't stop Hannibal, his cock already beginning to fill until it peaks through the hole of his boxers.

Hannibal snakes a hand into his boxers and wraps his large hand around him. Will moans, biting his lip to prevent any further sounds coming out. Hannibal smiles, "I want to hear you Will. This car is soundproof, no one but me will be able to hear you. As it should be."

Will unclenches his teeth, and moans again when Hannibal twists his wrist. It's just shy of painful, but with the way he is leaking, the way is quickly made slick. He is making breathless noises, pleasure pooling low.

Hannibal pulls his boxers down out of the way and bends over the console to put his mouth around Will who moans loudly. His left hand clenched around the fabric of his pants. Hannibal kisses the head of his cock before sinking his mouth down. Hannibal's mouth is hot and wet around him. Hannibal swallows when he hits the back of his throat.

Will resists the urge to thrust upwards but Hannibal squeezes his hips as if to encourage him, but Will doesn't want to hurt him.

Hannibal pulls off to say, "it is fine. I want you to fuck my mouth."

The way his voice curls around the word ‘fuck’ causes a dribble of pre-come to flow out of him. Hannibal’s voice is already hoarse and his lips are swollen. Hannibal’s mouth is back on him and Will allows the urge to thrust overcome him.

Hannibal is digging his fingers into Will’s hips almost painfully. He relaxes his throat and lets Will thrust to his heart’s content. It doesn’t take many thrusts before Will is spilling deep down Hannibal’s throat, swallowing around him causing oversensitivity to shoot through him like an arrow and he squirms. Hannibal pulls off him, licking his lips. “You taste magnificent.”

His voice is hoarser now, and Will rushes to kiss him. He can almost taste himself on Hannibal’s lips. He feels bone tired, but he reaches for Hannibal’s pants. Hannibal takes Will’s hand and kisses it.

“Let me.” Hannibal nods and lets Will undo his fly. Will reaches into the silk boxers, because of course Hannibal wears silk boxers, his cock is hot and heavy in his hand. There is a considerable damp spot on his boxers, and for a moment Will considers jerking Hannibal until he comes all over his pants but Will has always preferred reciprocity.

He leans over the console just like Hannibal had, he licks over the head, Hannibal tastes like salt and musk he moans at the taste. Hannibal moans above him, it’s heady; having Hannibal in his mouth, knowing that he is bringing him pleasure.

It’s easy letting his mind go, completely focused on bringing Hannibal pleasure. He sinks down until his nose brushes Hannibal’s pubic hair. Hannibal groans his name above him. He relaxes his throat, and encourages Hannibal to thrust forward.

Hannibal winds his hands through Will’s hair and pulls, Will hums in pleasure around Hannibal’s cock. Swallowing around him, Will can tell that Hannibal is close to coming by the way his cock is twitching in his mouth. Will moans his encouragement and Hannibal spills deep in his throat. Will pulls back so that some come lands on his tongue. He swallows before kissing the head of Hannibal’s cock, and sits back up. Hannibal is looking at him with hungry eyes, he pulls Will up and kisses him.

Will can’t stop kissing him, and he knows that Hannibal doesn’t want to either, but eventually they both run out of breath. He leans his forehead against Hannibal’s. “I could get used to this.”

“I could too. But I would still prefer to spend more time on you. I want you incoherent with pleasure.”

“You want to take me apart piece by piece and then put me back together again.”

“The idea is very compelling to me.”

Will laughs, usually he would be opposed to handing over so much power to another person but he trusts Hannibal with it. “Now I believe you promised me a gallery date.”

Hannibal runs a hand through Will's hair, pulling gently. Will had forgotten how much he enjoys having his hair pulled like this. "That I did."

They redo their pants and adjusts themselves until the things they had been up to are no longer obvious. Hannibal kisses him one more time before getting out of the car. Will follows him, his throat aches but it is an ache he loves. His cheeks ache from smiling so much, he knows it is all Hannibal's doing. He feels happier than he has in a long time, if ever. Hannibal winds his hand around his, and they stroll into the gallery. There are a few looks from people but at Hannibal's side he feels more confident than he ever has.

Inside Hannibal pays for their tickets, and they leave their coats in the cloakroom. Will feels warm even though it is quite cool in the gallery. Hannibal leads him through each room explaining various pieces. He doesn't look entirely satisfied though.

"You prefer classical art, don't you?"

"There is great merit in contemporary art, but, Will, have you ever been to the Uffizi gallery?"

"That's the one in Florence isn't it?"

"It is, I spent large parts of my time while in Florence in that gallery, sketching the paintings of the great masters. Especially the Boticellis, the first time I saw them I was astounded. It is rare to be in the same room as such beauty. Although being with you is just as breathtaking."

It is perhaps the most romantic thing someone has ever said to Will and he blushes. "There is nothing special about me."

Hannibal rounds on him. "Will, you are a magnificent creature. You would have been revered as a true beauty when those masterpieces were created. Do not let anyone ever tell you you are anything less than astounding."

Will kisses him, there are tears in his eyes but he blinks them away. His heart feels like it has doubled in size. Someone clears their throat and they break apart. Hannibal levels a glare at the man who is looking at them with obvious disgust. Will can feel the way Hannibal tenses, as if ready to jump at the man. "We will get him later." Will whispers at Hannibal who turns to him and looks with that fondness that he is slowly getting used to.

They head further in the gallery, but more often than not Will finds himself watching Hannibal rather than looking at the art on the walls. Hannibal is handsome with high cheekbones that are sharper than they have any right being. His eyes are expressive in a way that only Will can see at times, he is sure too many people have not understood the emotion in his eyes. Will is sure that even he isn't able to identify all that Hannibal's eyes betray.

Will's phone rings, shocking him out of his reverie. He answers it, "Will Graham?" He recognises the voice, it's Sutcliffe.

"Speaking."

“We’ve got your results back. Are you able to come in now?"

He looks at Hannibal who mouths ‘10 minutes’ at him. “We can be there in 10.”

“If you come straight to my office we can discuss the results.”

“Okay, we’ll be there soon.”

Sutcliffe hangs up and Will can tell there is something in his voice that doesn’t promise good news.

“You think Sutcliffe has got some difficult news.”

“Yes there was something in his voice that led me to believe that whatever it is he is going to tell us it’s not good.”

“There is only one way to find out. Onto the breach?”

Will nods and takes the proffered hand, the looks they are drawing are odd, and for a moment he puts himself in their shoes. They do make an odd pair, one obviously wealthy and the other a bit disheveled. He does enjoy the thought of them as a pair, it fills him with warmth. He knows that Hannibal doesn’t care what others think of him so he tries to ignore the disapproving stares.

The ride back to the hospital is tenser, and Will knows it’s because of him, his skin is abuzz with nervousness. He wishes there was something he could do to stop the anxiousness, the circles Hannibal is rubbing on the back of his hand calm him somewhat, but it’s not quite enough. He wants to reach out and touch Hannibal again, wants his mouth around Hannibal’s cock again. It’s something he has always enjoyed doing, it lets his mind go in a way nothing else does.

Hannibal looks at him with a heated gaze almost as if knows exactly what Will is thinking, “soon mylasmis.”

Will doesn’t fully understand what the word means, but he thinks he understands the intention behind it. It curls warm inside his chest, fuelling the flame of affection for Hannibal in him; the one that is growing bigger by the day.

They walk in silence to Sutcliffe’s office, Will feels almost as if he is walking towards a chopping block, ready for his execution. Sat in front of the doctor, he waits for the axe to come crashing against his neck to lop off his head.

Sutcliffe is looking at something on his computer screen, he turns to Will and sighs. “We know what’s causing the encephalitis.”

“It’s untreatable?”

“Not exactly, it’ll be difficult though.”

“How so?”

“Will you have what is known as anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis.”

Next to him Hannibal inhales sharply. Will looks at him briefly, and he sees the concern on his face. That is very sobering, perhaps a part of him always knew that it was something serious.

“What does it mean?”

“Something is causing your body to attack you NDMA receptor cells in your brain, it’s an encephalitis caused by an autoimmune disorder.”

Will remembers, “autoimmune diseases are difficult to treat.”

Sutcliffe sighs, “they are indeed. The best course of treatment is steroids along with intravenous immunoglobulin.”

“You are going to suppress his immune system.”

“It’s the only option we have, if that doesn’t help enough we may also look at plasmapheresis.”

“That sounds arduous.”

Sutcliffe looks at him he looks genuinely apologetic, “it will be hard, and take a long time. Prognosis isn’t great either, based on your age. A lot of people relapse, treatment is expensive too.”

“Money is no object.” Hannibal says with a finality that lets Will know that he doesn’t want any arguments.

“Very well. You will see the immunologist tomorrow who will go through everything in detail with you.”

“You won’t be treating me?” Will says incredulously.

“No, this falls more into an immunologist’s field of expertise.”

“Right.” The icy tone in Hannibal’s voice is back, and Will feels a coldness to the neurologist too, he feels like Sutcliffe is trying to get rid of him as soon as possible. “One would have thought that a neurologist such as yourself would be racing to treat something as rare as this brand of encephalitis."

Sutcliffe looks embarrassed, “like I said, the immunologist knows much more about autoimmune diseases than I ever could.” It sounds like a capitulation, and Will is sure that he has missed some sort of age old argument.

“Come in tomorrow morning at 8, the immunologist will go over everything in detail.”

“Well, Dr. Sutcliffe,” cold venom drips through Hannibal’s voice, but Will knows that Sutcliffe can’t hear it. “We will be heading back now. Thank you for your help.”

Hannibal looks like he is seething and guides Will out of the office without so much as a backwards glance in Sutcliffe's direction.

"You look like you're planning an accident for Sutcliffe."

"The thought has crossed my mind. I had thought perhaps time had tempered him somewhat. Alas it seems I was mistaken."

"You're not often mistaken."

"It is always disappointing, he is a great doctor, but a rude little man."

Will chuckles, "rudeness is distasteful."

"That it is." Hannibal smiles at him. "Let me take you home."

"Mine or yours?"

"Now that is entirely your decision. Where do you want me?"

Arousal flares in him again, it seems to Will as though every moment with Hannibal is filled with an undercurrent of constant arousal.

"I think yours might be a better fit, I don't really think my place is fit for human company."

"I have been to your home, Will, and it is wonderful. It suits you."

Will flushes, "it could do with a tidy. And I know that most people don't keep a bed in the living room."

"It makes sense for you. You like to keep everything contained to one space. You prefer your life utilitarian."

It strikes him, once again, how clearly Hannibal is able to see him when no other person has ever come close. He squeezes Hannibal's hand, Hannibal smiles at him. He can see the flash of Hannibal's sharp teeth, and imagines them grazing against his neck, marking him up for everyone to see. He knows Hannibal would enjoy it, based on the way Hannibal stares intently there sometimes.

He stretches his neck and watches out of the corner of his eye the way Hannibal follows the movement with his eyes. "Do I have something on my neck?"

"It is absolutely nothing."

"That's a shame." Hannibal gives him a hungry look.

"The sooner I can get you home the better."

"What are you waiting for?"

Hannibal smiles and places a hand at the small of Will's back and gently steers him towards the car.

The entire drive Hannibal keeps a hand on him, and Will leans into the touch gladly. He feels warm, the hand on him is like a brand, it conjures the image of Hannibal marking him again. He wonders how Hannibal would do it, there is a part of him that knows Hannibal would not be content with just bruises, would want something more permanent. The idea is not something that Will is opposed to, and that surprises him. A lot of things about his relationship with Hannibal are surprising to him, mostly the easiness of everything, the way they seem to fit together. It makes him feel better than anything else has for a long time.

They arrive outside Hannibal's house and he feels nervous suddenly, their attraction to each other is palpable and Will itches to have Hannibal naked and all to himself. He follows Hannibal into the house, before they enter he sends a text to Alana about the dogs, he receives one back almost instantaneously. He laughs and Hannibal looks at him questioningly, he shows the picture of the dogs all curled up together on the sofa.

"I did not know that so many dogs could fit onto one sofa."

"They can if they chose to, but usually they prefer being as far away from each other as possible. But somehow when Alana is there they like to be together."

"I am glad that Alana is there to look after them, because now I know that you will not be distracted. And I would much rather have you focussed entirely on me all evening."

Will gulps, the gaze Hannibal is levelling at him is heated, he wants to be inside Hannibal's house as soon as possible and let Hannibal have his way with him. Hannibal seems to sense this because he grabs Will and pulls him close.

"You have no idea of all the things I want to do to you."

"I can't wait."

Hannibal unlocks the door then and pulls him inside the house. Shutting the door behind them he pushes Will up against it and kisses him. All Will can do is hold onto Hannibal, his hands are clutching on to Hannibal's shoulders, wrinkling the fabric of his suit.

A knee is pressed between his legs and he spreads them slightly to accommodate, his cock is pressing against the zipper of his pants. It's almost painful and his whimpers. Hannibal bites his lip, pulling it with his teeth. They break apart and Will is panting, he is a mess of arousal and emotions which Hannibal seems to notice because he strokes a hand over his cheek, the action is gently in comparison to the kiss.

"What you do to me is unparalleled by anything." Hannibal breathes in the space between them. "The moment you gave me the gift is when any plans I had made flew out of the window."

Will chuckles, "what sort of plans had you made?"

“Something more elaborate and slow, I always thought that I would need to court and seduce you slowly.”

“A seduction was on the table?” Will says teasingly rolling his hips.

“I see now how that may not have been necessary.”

“All you had to do was say something.”

“You forced my hand, I suppose I never have been able to entirely predict you.”

Will nips at Hannibal’s lips, “and I can never quite predict you either. You have been so generous with your time and affection. I saw the item in the shop like I said and thought you would like it.”

Hannibal kisses him again, “that is why I had to kiss you. You thought of me in the most innocuous of situations and bought me something because you thought it would delight me.”

“I find you occupying more and more of my thoughts every day. I am always wondering about the ways you might react to things.” He pauses. And says as quietly as possible. “I miss you when you’re not there.”

Hannibal takes his hand and presses a kiss to the knuckles. Will feels like his heart is doubling in size.

“How you have managed to change my life so completely.” Hannibal says before kissing him again. Will moans into the kiss, especially when Hannibal winds his right hand into Will’s hair and pulls. It stretches Will’s neck and Hannibal kisses down it, biting down slightly over the pulse point. It sends another stab of arousal to his cock.

“There has to be some sort of horizontal surface in this house. As much as I am enjoying this sometimes I do quite enjoy a couch or bed for this kind of activity.”

Hannibal nods but does little to move them, he bites into his neck again. Will is glad for it, because he is sure that this will leave the marks he so desires. “How do you know exactly what I want and need in the moment I need or want it?”

“I find myself attuned to you, but I often feel like I am only able to understand a fraction of you. Like a radio that is just slightly out of tune.”

“About that horizontal surface?”

“I believe I can accommodate.” Hannibal takes Will’s hand and pulls him down the hall, Will shucks out of his jacket. At Hannibal’s questioning look he leaves it on the chair in the hallway. He can tell from Hannibal’s slight moue of disappointment that he wishes he were to put the jacket in its proper place. Normally he would be more considerate but Will needs Hannibal to have his hands on his bare skin.

Hannibal shakes his head slightly, like he can’t quite believe what he is doing.

“You don’t have to you know.” Will says.

“I want to, more than you could possibly know. I just find myself surprised that you are here in this capacity.”

“I am not going anywhere.” he says before kissing Hannibal again. “Now. Please take me to bed.”

“Your wish is my command.” Hannibal grasps Will’s hand and pulls him down the hall and up the stairs. The way is dark and imposing, but Will feels safe with Hannibal. The door Hannibal pulls him through has a samurai suit of armour standing next to it. Will is glad that his gift then, because Hannibal has such a strong affinity for Japanese culture.

Hannibal catches Will’s eye and gives him a smile. “Any particular thoughts?”

“That you have a very specific taste, and I am glad I managed to get you something close to it.”

“You gave me the most precious gift. Aside from your presence of course.”

Will blushes, a smile fills his face. He never would have known that Hannibal would be so easy with his affections. Although he supposes he should have expected it, considering how generous he is with physical affection even before this thing between them sprung up.

“When did you realise?” Hannibal looks at him with questions in his eyes.

“Realise what?”

“That you found me attractive.”

Hannibal looks at him with surprise. “Did you not know?”

Will shakes his head, he knows that this is counterintuitive to his earlier insistence for the bed, but this is far more important.

“It was the moment I saw you in Jack’s office. You were so angry that you bristled, you were rude in a way that shocked me. But you were funny, stunning to look at. I was a little dumbstruck to be entirely truthful. It was like you were a strong East wind blowing everything over."

“I didn’t know.” Will admits quietly, Hannibal steps up to him and cradles his cheek.

“Regret is not an emotion I often experience, but I do in this moment. Because maybe if I had been more obvious this might have been something we could’ve been doing earlier.”

“Speaking of which, I believe that I was promised a bed.”

Hannibal smiles and Will has the distinct feeling that he is prey. Before he is able to come up with a response Hannibal has put his arms around him and is lifting him. It seems almost

effortless to him. Hannibal throws him onto the bed where he lands and the wind is knocked out of him. Then Hannibal is crawling up him like a cat.

Having the weight on him is comforting and arousing in equal measures. Hannibal nips at his lips Will moans and winds his arms around Hannibal to hold him. He starts to unbutton Will's shirt, he rolls his shoulders to allow Hannibal to pull it off him. He is clawing at Hannibal's shirt, trying to get the buttons undone. His fingers are clumsy and he can feel the smile at his neck as Hannibal presses kisses down to his chest.

He takes one nipple between his teeth and tugs. The mixture of pain and pleasure has Will's cock hardening quicker than it has since he was a teenager. He grabs onto Hannibal's hair, the fine strands slipping through his fingers. He feels hot, each place where Hannibal is touching him feels like a brand. Will whimpers when Hannibal rolls the other nipple between his fingers.

"I didn't know."

Hannibal stops in his ministrations, "know what?"

"That my chest was this sensitive."

Hannibal hums before saying, "I wanted to see how you react, and I find myself quite pleased with the result."

He blows gently over the wet skin, Will gasps at the feeling. It's cold and makes him shudder. Looking up at Hannibal he realises he is gazing at him with the same fond look he often has. This time he also manages to looks smug, Will lifts up from the bed and Hannibal looks to him. He kisses Hannibal, who sighs into the kiss. He finds that he is addicted to kissing Hannibal, can't quite get enough of it, and by the way Hannibal is kissing him enthusiastically, Will figures he feels the same way.

Hannibal pulls back gently and pushes Will onto the bed. Holding him down with one hand, it is not something that Will had ever thought he would enjoy. But the arousal low in his belly spikes. Hannibal seems to know because he grinds his cock against Will's. The way is made easier from them both leaking pre-cum.

"Fuck, Hannibal." Will breathes.

"We're getting to that, dear boy."

The endearment sounds filthy in Hannibal's accent which has gotten thick with arousal. Will whines when Hannibal moves off him. He is somewhat impressed with the grace that Hannibal displays. He returns and climbs back on top of Will. He is holding a glass vial in his hand, Will isn't surprised that Hannibal has lube in a glass container, it suits him.

Hannibal unstoppers it and dips his fingers into the clear liquid. He coats his fingers and Will expects slick fingers at his hole but instead Hannibal reaches behind himself. Will moans, Hannibal as always surprises him.

“Let me watch.” Will grinds out. He is desperate to see Hannibal stretch himself. It’s a sight that he has always found incredibly erotic.

Hannibal shakes his head, “you will just have to use that imagination of yours.”

Will is beyond words but he concedes to watching Hannibal’s face. He drinks in the sight of every twitch and movement of his face as he preps himself. It almost distracts him from the pressing need to be buried inside Hannibal.

Hannibal is making small breathless moans with each twist and movement of his fingers. Will can imagine how it must feel to have those long fingers inside him. He can almost feel it himself and another dribble of pre-come leaks from his cock. Knowing the delicacy that those fingers can enact Will can feel the ghost of fingers stroking over his prostate, stretching gently. Will whines and Hannibal smiles down at him. Eyes glazed over slightly.

A slick hand is gripping his cock then, spreading lube down his shaft. His cock is positioned with those large hands and then Hannibal is sinking down onto him. Will is glad for the hand holding him down to the bed because he wants to raise up and hold Hannibal close.

Inch by inch Hannibal sinks down until his ass is flush with Will’s hips. He stops breathing for a moment, he feels as though they are standing on a cliff. He can feel the way Hannibal clenches around him. He didn’t think that the tight heat around him could get more exquisite but it is in that moment.

Hannibal pulls upwards until just the tip of Will’s cock is inside him. He lets himself fall again and moans, Will moans too, his hands scrabbling to find purchase in the comforter. The silk slides through his fingers. Hannibal sets a punishing pace of riding him. Will’s hands reach up until he has a hold on Hannibal’s hips.

Loud moans fill the space of the room, and Will doesn’t know whether they are his or Hannibal’s. Every pull on his cock has the pleasure coiling tighter and tighter. He wants to hold off as long as he can, but the sight of Hannibal riding him hard coupled with the feeling of being so completely linked with Hannibal has him close to orgasm.

Hannibal leans forward until his chest is against Will’s and he can feel Hannibal’s heartbeat. It is only when Hannibal is brushing a thumb over his cheek and it is wet that he realises he is crying. Will had never imagined that he could feel this way, his heart feels full with love. He gasps at the realisation. Will finds Hannibal’s mouth and kisses him, tears flowing freely now. And when he opens his eyes Hannibal is blurry. It almost like he has a strange figure riding him.

The pleasure is becoming overwhelming, and Hannibal links a hand with his, squeezing tightly. Will tries to get feet underneath him in order to thrust up, but Hannibal tuts slightly and Will stops his movement. Will is holding on tightly, knowing that Hannibal will do whatever he wants. His other hand is on Will’s hip holding on tightly, and he knows that he will have bruises. It is something Will enjoys immensely.

Clenching around him, Hannibal grinds his ass against Will’s hips and and his orgasm is pulled out of him, coming deep inside Hannibal. A whispered “I love you” on his lips. It is

like he blacks out for a while because when he returns to himself Hannibal is circling his hips. He looks at Hannibal and realises that the man hasn't come yet. He reaches his hand over but Hannibal swats it away.

Hannibal climbs off of him and Will winces, lying down next to Will. He takes one of Will's hands and pulls it to his ass. He can feel the come dripping out of Hannibal and his cock gives a valiant painful twitch. Hannibal sighs with happiness, some of the urgency in him seems to have gone. He grips Will's chin and kisses him again before saying, "say it again."

"I love you." Will says a little more clearly.

"And I love you, my dear boy." It fills Will with warmth.

"I have an idea, if you are not opposed." Will looks at him with a question in his eyes. "I want to fuck you. The idea of marking you in the way you have marked me gives me a great deal of pleasure."

Will's cock twitches again, and with how close Hannibal is to him he feels it. "I see you are not opposed to the idea."

He knows that he will be sensitive but the idea of oversensitivity has always been something Will enjoys.

"I am not opposed to the idea." He reaches for the glass vial and places it in Hannibal's hand. "Get me ready for you."

Hannibal smiles at him, it is predatory and it sends a shiver down Will's spine. He kisses Will hungrily and he whimpers. Hannibal circles Will's cock and pulls gently once, he is slick with lube and come and it verges on painful.

He crawls down Will kissing every inch of skin he can, he bites over the places where his fingers had been. Nibbling in those places until Will is sure further bruises will appear. He feels hot, like this feeling of being claimed by the man. Hannibal brushes lips over his cock and Will feels a low ebb of arousal. Then Hannibal is cleaning his cock with his mouth, and the wet heat is incredible, soon Hannibal pulls off of him and kisses him. Will can taste himself on Hannibal and he whines.

A wet tongue brushes over his hole and he jumps slightly. It is not something he has ever experienced. It sets his nerves on fire. "You have not done this before."

Will shakes his head and Hannibal says, "then I am glad I am the first to do this for you."

He arches his back when Hannibal resumes, canting his hips closer to Hannibal. The noises he makes as Hannibal eats him out are obscene, and he bites his knuckles to stop them from escaping. Hannibal draws back, "I want to hear you."

Will lets go of the knuckles, massaging the digits to try and get rid of the marks. His moans pitch higher when Hannibal pushes a finger into him next to his tongue. It feels strange, fuller than he expects, but it's pleasant. The long finger is as enjoyable as he imagined, they are

able to reach further than Will's own when he has done this to himself. Hannibal sits back and dips his fingers into the vial. He pushes the slick digit into Will, who moans loudly. Hannibal's name choked off by the noise.

Hannibal brushes over his prostate, and the sensitivity overwhelms him slightly. Tears welling in his eyes, he didn't think he could love someone as much as he loves Hannibal, this man is able to put him together in a way no one else has. His hand finds Hannibal's free one, he winds their fingers together drawing them up to his mouth to kiss the back of his hand.

The pressure on his prostate is constant and it winds the low arousal higher and higher. Another finger is pushed into him, Hannibal is insistent with the way he moves his fingers. His hand never leaves Hannibal's, squeezing hard and Hannibal hums happily.

After long moments of Hannibal stretching him something in Will breaks, "Hannibal. I'm ready. Please fuck me."

"What you do to me, dear boy." Hannibal says as he withdraws his fingers, he slicks his cock with the remaining lube on his hand. He presses a kiss to the corner of Will's mouth before he presses his cock into Will.

He is much bigger than his fingers but Will doesn't care, the pain of the stretch makes him feel claimed by Hannibal in a way that nothing else could. Hannibal keeps pushing until his hips are flush with Will's ass. He gives Will a long moment to adjust before he pulls out. He slams into Will, who groans; and he is only aware when Hannibal grasps his cock that he is hard again.

The hand on him is almost painful, and Hannibal keeps the circle of his fingers soft and loose. Hannibal is fucking into him with abandon. If he felt like he was on fire before, it is nothing in comparison to how he feels in this moment. The thrusts are brutal in their intensity and speed, but they become easier as Hannibal fucks Will open, the sound of their skin slapping against each other fills the room, along with the myriad of sounds Will is making.

Every thrust hits his prostate, and the oversensitivity gives way to pleasure, arousal coiling higher and higher. Will is squeezing Hannibal's hand, holding on for dear life, as he feels like he is floating, and the points where they are connected are the only places holding him to earth.

Each pull of Hannibal's cock in him is agonisingly pleasurable, he can feel every twitch inside him. It is single-handely the most erotic experience of his life. Hannibal is grunting above him, sweat drips down Hannibal's forehead and lands on his chest. He too is flushed with heat and sweat. Will almost feels like he is going to slide off the bed, and only Hannibal is keeping him pinned there.

Hannibal twists his wrist in the same moment that he thrusts forwards. The dual assault on his cock and his prostate has Will coming again, only a small dribble of come leaking out of him. He milks Hannibal's cock as he comes with a groan. Hannibal coming deep inside him makes him feel completely debauched and claimed. Hannibal collapses on top of him. He slips out of him, followed by a dribble of come. Clenching with nothing inside feels wrong

after having had Hannibal. He winds his arms around Hannibal and holds him close, kissing him deeply.

“That was something.” Hannibal says breathlessly.

“Yeah.” Will agrees. He is panting as though he just ran a marathon. He supposes in some ways he has. “I didn’t know it could be like this.”

“Like what?”

“All consuming, like a religious experience.”

“I feel the same way. Sex has often been a means to an end, but with you it feels like making a connection deep in my bones.”

Will kisses him again, unable to find another way of expressing his feelings. “I do love you, you know.” Will says.

“And I you, dear boy. An emotion that has been so rare in my life until now. As I said earlier, you turn my life upside down.”

“I know the feeling.” Will admits, his heart is heavy with love and he feels drunk.

“What will happen now?” Will says after long moments of holding onto Hannibal.

“How do you mean?”

“With the treatment, it’ll be a lot to deal with. I don’t want to put that on you.”

Hannibal leans up and looks into Will’s eyes. “I told you before, I will be there. No matter what happens.”

“But what if I get too sick.” Will looks away from Hannibal, “I’ll be spending so much of my time going from appointment to appointment and back home.”

“So stay with me.”

“Just like that?”

“Just like that. The dogs are welcome of course, the garden would have more than enough space for them.”

“You would tolerate the dogs in your pristine house?”

“They are well-trained, a credit to you. Besides there is some life that could be added to the house. I just ask that they stay out of the kitchen and dining room.”

“You are sure?”

“Positive, I want to be there for you.”

Tears well in his eyes, “no one has ever done something like this for me.”

“Will, my dear boy, it is a travesty that no one has treated you in the way you deserve.” Hannibal is cupping his cheek, a thumb stroking gently over it. “I will make sure that you always have somewhere safe to come home to.”

Will kisses him gently, tears flowing over and down his cheeks. Hannibal climbs off of Will and he misses the heat and weight instantly. “I suggest we shower and then sleep?”

“I think that might be appropriate.” The come on his stomach is beginning to get tacky, pulling on his skin. He follows Hannibal out of the room, happy that Hannibal is content being completely naked. He enjoys looking at him, realising that he has not had the opportunity to look at Hannibal naked. The play of muscles in his back and legs are hypnotising, he looks like a predator. His suits have hidden his physique and not for the first time he curses Hannibal’s clothes.

He is lead into the ensuite bathroom, that is larger than any bedroom in his house. The shower is walk in and will have more than enough space for both of them. Hannibal steps inside and turns on the water, beckoning Will close who follows gladly. The temperature of the water is perfect, soothing his aching muscles.

Hannibal takes the shampoo bottle that is in one corner and after asking Will to wet his hair he begins washing it. Hannibal’s fingers are strong as he massages his scalp, with a small flash of arousal he remembers what those fingers can do. The arousal isn’t urgent so he ignores it, content to melt underneath Hannibal's hands. After a few moments Hannibal rinses his hair, Will turns to return the favour but he realises that Hannibal is already sudsing his own hair. “That’s not fair.”

“Life is not fair, besides I want to look after you.”

Will laughs and reaches for the soap to wash his body. The scent is familiar, it’s what he always smells on Hannibal, it’s woodsy without being intrusive. He loves the scent on Hannibal and the thought of smelling like him is very gratifying, like every part of him will be claimed by Hannibal. Will is being watched with hungry eyes, almost like Hannibal knows exactly what he’s thinking and is enjoying the line of thought.

They finish washing and Hannibal turns off the shower, he gives Will a large fluffy towel, and he wraps himself in the towel. It is softer than any towel he has ever experienced. Hannibal dries himself off before rummaging through one of the cabinets. He gives Will a wrapped toothbrush. Will quirks an eyebrow, “get a lot of overnight visitors?”

“Not particularly, but I have always believed in being prepared, and it makes me feel better knowing that each toothbrush is sterile.”

Will shakes his head in disbelief. “I suppose I will be staying more than one evening.”

“I hope so indeed."

Will smiles and ties the towel around his waist, he takes the proffered toothbrush from Hannibal, unwrapping it before brushing his teeth. Hannibal stands next to him at the sink and does the same.

The atmosphere in the room is charged, but Will feels content. Hannibal looks at him and then his eyes get wide. “I have completely forgotten to serve you dinner. How terribly rude of me. A shameful excuse for a host.”

Will laughs after rinsing his mouth. “I could eat something small, but mostly I want to get into bed and sleep. You have tired me out completely.”

Hannibal looks slightly ashamed before saying, I suppose I could rustle up something light, because I too would much rather have you back in my bed.”

“Thank you, Hannibal.” Will says and squeezes Hannibal’s hand. “Besides I need to go down and get my overnight bag, and my pajamas.”

“I much prefer you just as you are.”

“I could be persuaded. But I do need my bag.”

Hannibal shrugs, he fetches a robe from the back of the door and pulls it on. Will follows Hannibal down into the kitchen in just the towel. He can see the furtive glances Hannibal is making in his direction. He is smiling as he follows him. The kitchen is immaculate as it always is.

Will cannot believe what has happened in this house in the past few weeks. It is not what he had imagined, but he doesn’t begrudge it at all.

“I have some Jamon Iberico, well almost. I suppose I could make a charcuterie platter. If that is something you think you would enjoy?”

“I would love something simple and light so charcuterie sounds perfect.”

Hannibal smiles and takes out some containers from the fridge. He manages to find a platter in one of the many cupboards, and he starts arranging the items on the plate. Will is impressed at how artfully Hannibal arranges everything. “I cured this ham myself, in the cellar.”

“You have a cellar?”

“I had builders fit it when I first bought the house. I needed somewhere else to store food and wine. I had an acclimatised room built for them.”

“Sounds like you could live your life out of your cellar. Will I get a grand tour?”

“Someday.”

“I like the promise of that. Like there’s a future here.”

“A long future, I assure you of that.”

The words do something to Will, a mixture of arousal and love. Hannibal is looking at him with hungry eyes.

“Food first.” He says after a moment, shaking his head as if to clear it.

“You know we could always eat here. And then return to the bedroom for dessert.”

Hannibal considers him. “I am not usually one for eating in here. I like to keep these things separate. But I suppose for you I can make an exception.”

“Am I often an exception to one of your rules?”

“You are the only exception.”

It fills Will with happiness and he leans over the counter to kiss Hannibal. “Now what have we got aside from Jamon Iberico?”

“We also have black madeira figs, these have a wonderful complex flavor that put all others to shame. A few shavings of truffle and some pule cheese.”

“Pule?”

“It is made from Balkan donkey milk, giving it a distinct rich and smokey flavor.”

“That sounds unusual.”

“It is a little unusual but have I ever served anything that you have not enjoyed?”

“That is true. I will try anything you put in front of me.”

“Anything?”

“Now that is a loaded question, but yes, I trust you.”

“You honor me.”

Will flushes and picks up a ham rose and slides it into his mouth. The flavor bursts on his tongue, the meat is delightfully tender. He swallows the mouthful, “and you cured this yourself?”

“I did indeed. I am glad that you are enjoying it.”

“Is there anything you can’t do.”

“There are things that I cannot do.”

“Like what?”

“I am not a particularly good tennis player.”

Will chuckles, “that is your one flaw?”

“I do not consider it to be a flaw, I find it a tedious game to play.”

Will laughs again and takes a fig and bites into it, juices dribble down his chin. Hannibal looks transfixed. “Do I have something on my face?”

Hannibal leans over the counter and licks the juices off his chin. “I could get used this.” Will says with a laugh before kissing Hannibal again. They break apart and together they pick at the plate eating until it’s empty.

Once they are finished Hannibal takes the plate and puts it in the sink. “Now you mentioned something about dessert?”

“I believe I did. Just let me fetch my bag and meet me upstairs in your room?”

Hannibal nods and walks out of the kitchen to head upstairs. Will walks over to the front door, he picks up his bag and the jacket he’d left lying there. Placing it over the bannister of the stairs so that it is out of the way.

He climbs the stairs, being in Hannibal’s house by himself is a little unnerving, but he supposes that he needs to get used to the situation, if he is to spend a significant time there. When he reaches the bedroom Hannibal has changed the sheets and is lying underneath a comforter, he has gotten out of the robe. Will realises he wants to dig his hands into the hair on his chest and tug slightly.

Will drops his towel which causes Hannibal to lick his lips. Underneath Hannibal’s gaze he can feel himself harden. He climbs onto the bed and over Hannibal, straddling his hips. The silk between them feels like a kiss along his cock. He winds his fingers into Hannibal’s chest hair, he tugs and Hannibal moans into his mouth.

Hannibal’s tongue invades Will’s mouth and plunders it. Sucking on his tongue, he feels dizzy with want. Suddenly the barrier of fabric between them is too much and Will lifts off him slightly and pulls the comforter away. Will lowers himself down, so that Hannibal’s cock is nestled against his ass.

“Have I awakened a monster?” Hannibal says with a laugh, his nails rake lines down his back.

“The question is; do you like the monster you have created?”

“Very much so. I love my creation.”

“‘If I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear.’”

“Did you just quote Frankenstein at me?”

“I thought it might be appropriate.” Will says as he rolls his hips. Hannibal’s cock is hot against him and catches slightly at his rim.

Hannibal twists his arms around Will and lifts him up and throws him onto his back, before straddling him in turn. “It is very appropriate.”

“Am I solely your creation then? We know that Frankenstein loved his monster.”

“You really know the story. And I believe that I am not your maker. After all I can whisper through the chrysalis, but what hatches follows its own nature and is beyond me. I can never quite predict you fully my dear boy.”

Will grinds upwards against Hannibal’s cock. “You flatter me.”

“There is no flattery needed when I am speaking the truth.” Hannibal says. He grinds down against Will who gasps. The slide of their cocks over each other is slightly too dry and Hannibal reaches next to him and retrieves the vial. “You are always prepared.” Will says with a laugh.

Hannibal doesn’t say anything and dips his fingers into the vial and slicks his hand. He wraps the hand around both of them to ease the way. He thrusts against Will who moans. He looks down them, he is leaking steadily. Will chuckles slightly, he doesn’t think he has ever felt so giddy and uncontrolled. Hannibal’s cock is red and Will licks his lips. If he weren’t thoroughly enjoying what they were doing he would have suggested letting Hannibal use his mouth.

Hannibal pulls Will’s chin up to look in his eyes and kisses him. His other hand is still wrapped around them and he is jerking them slowly whilst he thrusts against Will. He feels flushed again, sure that he is flushed from the root of his hair to his toes.

He is kissed again and Hannibal speeds up his hand and thrusts and Will can feel the pleasure begin to crest. Hannibal is murmuring praises in his ear, and it makes Will feel cherished and loved. It makes Will feel desperate for more, he didn’t know that he was so hungry for praise until now. He is gasping Hannibal’s name with each slide of his cock against Hannibal’s. His pleasure is coiling tighter and tighter, threatening to release with each movement.

Hannibal squeezes his hand around him and makes a few abortive thrusts before he is coming between them. The feeling of warm come slashing against him pulls his orgasm from him. Hannibal groans and kisses him again.

Will pulls Hannibal close and kisses him. “Do you have something to clean up with? I don’t know if my legs can hold me upright for another shower.”

Hannibal smiles and reaches for the nightstand, he is holding a flannel in his hand. He wipes over them and Will winces a little too sensitive for the motion, but Hannibal is efficient at cleaning them and he is finished quickly and drops it back on the nightstand.

He rolls off of Will and onto his back. Will scoots over until his head is lying on Hannibal’s chest. He plays with the hair on his chest, content with hearing Hannibal’s heartbeat. Hannibal pulls up the comforter to cover them both.

“I suggest you try to sleep, we have an early start and a long arduous day ahead of us tomorrow.”

“You’ll be spending the entire day with me? Don’t you have patients?”

“I will arrange for the ones that cannot move to be phone calls instead.” Will looks up at Hannibal and kisses him again. He is so filled with love for the man, and every gesture Hannibal makes for him is far beyond anything he has ever experienced.

He lays his head back down on Hannibal’s chest who begins to play with his hair. The motion is pleasant and it lulls Will into a dreamless sleep.

***

Will wakes with a start, light is tickling his face and he can feel eyes on him. Will looks up and he is still in the position he fell asleep in, except that his legs are intertwined with Hannibal’s, who is tracing lazy circles on his back. “What time is it?”

“About 6am. We have about 10 minutes before we need to get up.”

“6am? That is far too early to function.”

“We do have an appointment to keep.” Realisation dawns on Will and his heartbeat rackets up. He is nervous all of a sudden.

“I think I may have had the best night’s sleep I’ve had in ages.”

“I am glad, my dear boy. Any particular dreams you remember?”

“Surprisingly no, or at least none that I can recall.”

He sits up and then leans down to kiss Will. “I have some breakfast I can make for you.”

As if on cue his stomach rumbles. “Are you sure I can eat? A lot of treatments require you to be fasting.”

“Believe me you will want to have eaten for this one. It is no requirement to be fasting for it.”

Will hums happily. “Can I help with breakfast?”

“You can keep me company at least until you’ve had coffee.”

“You know me far too well.”

Hannibal kisses him again. He gets up out of the bed and pulls on a pair of pajama pants and a red pullover. It is incredibly endearing to see Hannibal like this. As much as he likes seeing

Hannibal dressed to the nines, having him in casual clothes feels like he is better honoured. He gets out of bed and pulls on the pair of pajama pants he brought with him, as well as a worn t-shirt. Hannibal considers him, “you could do with some new t-shirts.”

“I like these, they’re soft.”

“There are high-quality t-shirts that are like butter. I know just the place.”

“I could be persuaded.”

“I am glad. I will endeavour to find something suitable.”

Will follows Hannibal down into the kitchen. Where he begins taking things out of the fridge. “Would protein scramble be something you could be agreeable to?”

“Are you trying to remind me of our first meal?”

“The thought had crossed my mind.”

“Protein scramble would be perfect.”

Hannibal smiles that smile that makes Will think it is just for him.

“I do remember that morning fondly. The question is do you find me interesting now?”

Will approaches him at the kitchen counter and wraps his arms around him, his chest pressed to Hannibal’s back. “One could say I find you incredibly interesting.”

“I know exactly how interesting you find me.”

Will laughs, “I was lying before you know.”

“I know. It was not something you would have easily admitted.”

Will sighs, “how are you able to know me so completely?”

Hannibal turns around to face him, lifting his chin so that he’s gazing straight into Will’s eyes. He finds himself looking right back at him. “I see you Will. Every part of you, even when you might not be able to see it.”

Will smiles. “And I see you.” And he does, he can see a darkness in Hannibal that matches his own. It promises something that he can’t quite fathom just yet.

He kisses Hannibal who sighs happily, before they break apart. “Now, I promised you breakfast.”

Will steps back reluctantly, “what do you want me to do? Well before that is there coffee available?”

Hannibal laughs and goes to a ridiculous looking coffee maker. “Give it 5 minutes and then you can have a cup of coffee.” Will nods slowly.

He begins to gather ingredients from the fridge. He moves with the grace of a dancer dancing a well-known choreography. He seems to know timings instinctively, because he begins to pour a cup of coffee after several minutes.

Handing it to Will who thanks him, sipping at the cup. The coffee is much richer than the instant coffee he usually drinks. After he finishes his cup, Hannibal turns to him and says, "could you beat the eggs for me?"

Will nods and takes the proffered bowl and eggs. He cracks each one before whisking them. Hannibal, meanwhile, is frying something in a pan behind him. When he finishes he passes the bowl to Hannibal who adds the mixture to the pan.

It doesn't take long for the scramble to be ready and he plates the mixture on two plates. "If you grab yourself another cup and then join me in the dining room."

It takes Will a moment to figure out how to work the coffee maker but he does eventually and cradling the cup he follows the hallway into the dining room. Hannibal has set the table with only a hint of the usual centerpieces, it's nice that the room is more casual.

He sits in the empty seat opposite Hannibal who smiles at him. "Dig in."

Somehow the scramble is even nicer than the first time he had eaten it. He moans unashamedly, and Hannibal gives him a heated look. Will flushes, busying himself with the food and drink in front of him.

They pass the meal in comfortable silence, and when they finish Will follows Hannibal back into the kitchen with his plate, placing it in the dishwasher following instruction by Hannibal.

Before he knows it they are dressed and sat in the car on their way to the hospital. Nervousness begins to spread through him and Hannibal winds his free hand through his. He smiles at the man, thankful for the grounding affection.

When they arrive at the hospital they are directed straight to the immunology department where he is hooked to an IV drip after a few blood draws and questions.

Hannibal sits with him almost the entire time, except when he leaves to talk to his patients. Will misses Hannibal every time he leaves, but relief is palpable when Hannibal returns. Each time Hannibal smiles at him and kisses him.

About 3 hours into being connected to various different IV bags he begins to feel nauseous. Hannibal sits closer to him, rubbing soothing circles on his back, at some point Hannibal asks a nurse for anti-emetics, which eases some of the nausea.

Sutcliffe comes down to meet them at about the four hour mark. He looks a little annoyed and he is snippy with both Hannibal and Will, he can sense the animosity between Hannibal and the neurologist. He knows then that Hannibal will enact some sort of retribution on the man, and Will cannot wait. Sutcliffe seems to exhibit some sort of sense as he leaves them soon.

Hannibal leaves and returns with a steaming bowl. “A silkie chicken soup with red dates, goji berries, bok choy, ginseng and white fungus.”

Will laughs, “you made me chicken soup.” He feels a little out of it, drowsy and dizzy.

Hannibal smiles, and places the bowl in front of him. “You should eat something.”

Will eats about half the bowl before the nausea becomes too overpowering. “You magnificent boy.” Hannibal says and Will smiles weakly.

After 6 hours he is unhooked from the IV drip and sent home with a bag filled with anti-emetics. An appointment for the following day is made. Hannibal has to help carry him to the car. His knees are weak and he feels dizzy. He falls asleep in the car lulled by the engines noise and the warmth.

***

Will wakes up when they park and Hannibal helps him out if the car. “I’m sorry.” Will says when he is stood outside the door panting heavily. “Who would have thought I’d feel like shit so quickly.”

“It is a bit unusual but some people react more quickly than others. Do not blame yourself. I have said it before and I will say it again now: I am here for you and I will not be going anywhere.”

Will smiles and follows Hannibal into the house. When the doors open 7 dogs are scampering towards him. He sinks to his knees with tears in his eyes. When Winston pushes an insistent nose into his face and licks him. He can’t help it; he begins crying. Partly out of exhaustion and partly because he is so filled with love that Hannibal would do something like this for him.

Hannibal crouches down next to him and rubs his back. “I did not think this would elicit this reaction.”

“They’re happy tears. Hannibal, thank you. I don’t know how I could ever repay you.”

“You concentrate on getting better and I will be here.”

Will wipes the tears away and kisses Hannibal. “I can try that.”

Hannibal smiles and stands up. “Let me show you the adjustments i have made for the dogs.”

Will stands carefully. He still feels a little shaky but Hannibal supports him as he takes him further into the house. In a room further next to the living room, Hannibal has gotten someone to clear the space and there are seven dog beds spread around the room, plenty of toys and water bowls and the door at the back opens into the garden.

“I know it will be strange that you will not be sleeping in the same room as them, but is not something I am comfortable with yet.” He opens the door and the dogs steam out into the garden.

To Will’s surprise the garden isn’t perfectly manicured, instead it is well maintained but has a wildness. At his raised eyebrow Hannibal laughs and says, “I have always enjoyed gardens that are a little closer to nature.”

The dogs enjoy exploring every inch and Hannibal leads him to a patio set and gently helps him to sit. Will enjoys the feeling of the sun on his face. Hannibal goes back into the house and returns a little while later with something to drink. Will accepts the glass from him with a smile and drinks greedily. He hadn’t realised how thirsty he was.

They sit in comfortable silence and Will lets his mind run. There is something that had been bothering him since the hospital. Hannibal’s actions at the hospital had reminded him of something. He is thinking about something in the Chesapeake Ripper’s file.

Will lets the glass fall as he realises, the glass shatters on the stone patio. He feels shaky and like he is seeing Hannibal clearly for the first time.

Hannibal is looking at him with concern. “What is it Will, do you have a headache? Do you want an aspirin?”

Will can barely get the words out as Hannibal begins to clear the glass. “You’re the Chesapeake Ripper.”

Hannibal freezes with a shard of glass in his hand. Will can see the cogs turning in his mind, he can also see that the shard of glass would be large and sharp enough to hurt him if Hannibal desired. His hand twitches around the shard and Will can almost imagine feeling the glass on his neck and splitting the skin.

“What makes you think that?” Hannibal says after long tense moments.

“It was the way you spoke to Sutcliffe. There was a moment when I sensed danger for him. And then I just remembered I had realised that the Chesapeake Ripper would have to have been in the medical field.”

“So you instantly thought of me?”

“Not immediately. But there was something in your eyes earlier. Like you would watch the world burn when someone disappoints you.”

Will rubs at his temples and he can see the concern in Hannibal’s eyes. Something in Will breaks and he slides out of his chair and onto the floor in front of Hannibal. He wraps his hand over Hannibal’s hand around the glass. Gently unclasping the hand until Hannibal has to drop the shard. Will cups Hannibal’s cheek and kisses him gently.

Hannibal doesn’t respond, in fact he doesn’t even seem to be breathing. Will drops his hand and says, “I see all of you Hannibal.”

Hannibal is looking at him strangely, his head cocked like his dogs might do when they are listening to him talk.

“It’s beautiful. Every one of your tableaux are a masterpiece. That first one, it was like a gift. You have been like a shadow by my side at all times. I would not want you anywhere else.”

Hannibal exhales and kisses Will hungrily. Will whimpers, there is something predatory about it and he enjoys it incredibly. When he breaks them apart he is breathing heavily.

He is stroking over Will’s cheek his eyes filled with emotion. “The only thing is, I don’t have your appetite.”

“You knew.”

“I think I realised during the Hobbs case.”

“It will not happen again.”

“It is not something you ever developed a taste for, but it is the ultimate victory.”

“You magnificent creature.” Hannibal says and kisses him again.

Will has to break them apart because he begins to feel dizzy. Hannibal laughs and says, “let me take you to bed and you can sleep.”

He is helped to his feet by Hannibal and led back into the house. With each step he feels heavier and heavier. “Will every day be like this?”

“I think, unfortunately, it will. But I will be there every day.”

Hannibal deposits him on the bed and leaves the room. Will misses him by his side but begins to take off his shirt and pants until he is only in his undershirt and boxers. He climbs under the covers.

Hannibal returns to the room with a bottle of water and a covered bowl. “I see you made yourself comfortable.”

“I feel like I am about to drift off.”

“I thought as much, could you try a few more sips of the soup. I would feel better if you ate a little more.”

“I doubt I can lift my head properly.”

“I could help you.”

“You intend to feed me.”

“I could if you wanted.”

“I can accommodate. Besides you like me like this, completely at your mercy.”

“There is a certain appeal to the image, and before that might have been a greater appeal but now I just want you to be healthy again.”

Will hums and pats the bed next to him. “Feed me some of the soup.”

Hannibal smiles and sits next to Will, he dips a spoon into the bowl and feeds it to Will. The soup is as delicious as it was the first time. He manages about 5 spoonfuls of Hannibal carefully feeding him before he can’t eat anymore. Hannibal places the bowl on the nightstand.

“Will you hold me until I fall asleep?”

“Gladly.”

Will sighs sleepily. “Take off the suit please, I want to feel as much of you as possible.”

“For you, anything.”

Hannibal strips out of his suit and Will watches with keen eyes, if he didn’t feel like shit he would probably be initiating something in that moment, but he doesn’t feel like he has enough energy to do anything.

When Hannibal is down to his underwear and vest he climbs over Will onto the bed. Hannibal wraps himself around his back and holds him close. He is warm and solid and it comforts Will.

“What do we do about Uncle Jack? He will not let the ripper die, even if the ripper never commits another crime.”

“Jack is persistent. But I am sure there is a suitable patsy available.”

“Chilton could be implicated.”

Will turns to Hannibal, “you have a plan?”

“There are certain things that are already in place. I would not have been as successful as I am if I had not been able to obfuscate things.”

Will turns back around and kisses the back of Hannibal’s hand. “It won’t be your last.”

“No. I suspect not, the world is filled with shockingly rude people.”

“Perhaps we can come to an agreement.”

“I am sure we will.” Hannibal kisses the nape of Will’s neck and pulls him closer. “Sleep now my love. We have another hard day tomorrow.”

Will falls asleep to dream of them conquering Troy, together he and Hannibal take it all, leaving the dead in their wake.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!